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IN THE SHADOWS, DRIFTING

-It was as here it is:
pieces of my time-

by

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August 11, 1938, I was not quite 20 and it was my first Atlantic crossing. All the way over across the ocean from Nazi Germany on my way to the magic of America, I was filled with the wonder of it and the excitement and the so many different faces of the passengers: Americans, Italians, German Jews. The Americans mostly were middle-aged, plainly dressed, sometimes breaking out in songs strange to my ears: 'Old MacDonald Had A Farm', 'Swing Low, Sweet Chariot', 'Oh Susannah', 'I Been Workin' On The Railroad'. What kind of music was that? Not like 'Broadway Melody' in the movies! And the men! Where were those suave Americans rakishly wearing trenchcoats, collars up, epaulets on their shoulders, hats pulled down in Bogart fashion? And where were the slinky women in fabulous gowns making entrances with all heads turned?

The Italians, also middle-aged and plainly dressed, were not my idea of Italians, either.

During the early Hitler years, when I still lived in Germany, there were lots of Italians, young and lively, vacationing in Germany, their country part of the Axis. All day long on the streets of Berlin, one heard the joyous cries of Paisan! Paisan! Paul--soon to become my husband--who, with his dark features and black hair, looked Italian--was hugged many times, encircled by their arms and smiling faces.

The Italians on our ship were in no way different from any other passengers aboard. Just the same, one of them had his eyes on me, constantly alert to be in my company. That I was

Jewish did not concern him, though I wondered why his wife didn't seem to mind his flirting with me.

The Jewish passengers were immigrating to America. We were the lucky ones, we were getting out of Germany. The younger Jews, I among them, soon got together and surprisingly had a good time.

Now the first meal was being served. The crew, from the Captain down, looked handsome in their blue and white gold-braided uniforms and visored caps. Were they Nazis? How else would they have gotten their positions? Yet--they treated us polite and friendly, unbelievable after our experiences in Germany. The food was superb. The rolls white. Butter, lots of butter. In Germany all breads were brown, tasteless, probably sawdust in it. And butter!--almost impossible to buy. There were no shortages here. The ship--decor, service, food--equalled the finest hotel anywhere.

We passed through the English Channel, never thinking that within one year there would be war and the Channel mined.

The weather was lovely. Blue skies and sunshine. The sea calm.

Those seven days of our voyage were heaven. No responsiblities no fears. Suddenly we were young, young like other youths, cradled in a present where no past existed and no future intruded.

We played shuffleboard. We sat on deck chairs, tanning ourselves. We were served broth in the morning and wonderful little cakes in the afternoon. We danced at night, laughed a

lot. Time stood still.

When the Statue of Liberty came into view there was exhilaration. Then fear. Past and future rushing back into our lives. The illusory voyage over.

None of us had money. Fifty marks was all an individual was allowed to take out of Nazi Germany, Hitler dictating every inch of the way of life--and death--for all Germans.

I had never met the people who had vouched for me. My husband's cousins were to pick me up, take me to their home in New Rochelle.

Would they be there?

They were.

Paul's cousin Elli and her husband Marshall greeted me warmly. They were young, only ten years older than I, she very pretty and vivacious. My fear of the unknown abated, since Paul had told me that I could stay with them, they having two small children and so I could help out until I spoke English well enough to find work.

No sooner were we in the car on our way to their home in New Rochelle, a fashionable suburb thirty minutes by train from New York City, when Elli told me that in America everyone worked, that although there was a depression in the land she would help me find a job as a sleep-in domestic. My heart sank.

When we arrived home, to my surprise Marshall's two sisters and two sisters-in-law were there to greet me, anxious to hear what was happening to the Jews in Germany. Luckily they spoke

a mixed Yiddish-German. In that way we could understand each other. I told them what it had been like in Magdeburg and Berlin: mobs forming, fists raised, running, screaming 'Down with the Jews', running toward Jewish-owned stores, smashing the windows, dragging the proprietors out on the street, making them crawl. If they had beards, still worse. No matter where one walked in the city, this went on day after day, getting worse all the time. Men never slept home at night. If they had no place to stay, they rode the subways all night so as not to be picked up by the Nazis. Gentile children were told by the Hitler youth organization to report their parents if they spoke out against the Nazi regime, the parents who did then were picked up, sent to prison and camps. Nazi spies were everywhere, could be anybody: someone looking at the showcased items inside a department store, or at the window displays outside, engage a nearby person--a man waiting for a bus, a housewife window-shopping-in a seemingly casual conversation, idly leading up to national politics. And so very often picked them up then and there, for having made a negative reply...

What more could I tell them? Only the most important thing: get Paul out of Germany, help him come to America, <u>save his life</u>!

Immediately, the women told their husbands--two men who had just arrived--"We have to give Ruth's husband an affidavit." The men promised. And with Marshall also providing his affidavit, I had amazingly gotten three valid affidavits after arriving in America--in New Rochelle--only three short hours ago--fresh off

the ship from Germany! Paul had been right. I had to get to America first--which I did. Then get the affidavits for him--which I had just done. I couldn't wait for him to come to America! But later, I was told by the immigration authorities that I also had to give Paul an affidavit, even though my earnings were nil: proof that he was married to an American citizen, so entitling him to enter the United States on the preference quota--a wait of only three months, they said. Three months--an eternity!

I had no time for eternity.

When would it end?

Let me begin from the beginning, my beginning...

. . .

Jutroshin, a town in East Prussia, Germany, was a place close to the border of Poland, where my great-grandparents, on my father's side, Sam and Johanna Bloch Sklarek lived. Today Jutroshin exists only on old maps.

Sam was a dairy wholesaler. Neighboring farms supplied him with butter, eggs, cheese. Once a week with horse and wagon he drove to town, delivering these dairy products to his customers. Friday nights, Shabbat--Saturdays--and other holy days, he officiated as a lay rabbi to his small Jewish community. Johanna kept a strictly kosher household. Their door was always open to all who sought Sam's help: widows, supplicants, squabblers, all part of the human condition in the border town of Jutroshin.

Lottie--my Grandmother Charlotte--was their first-born. Johanna gave birth seven more times. She was always pregnant or nursing, and though by this time the family was well-to-do, Lottie had to help raise her siblings.

At 18 years of age, Lottie, looking into the future, could only see for herself more of the same: marriage, giving birth, raising children. Only a miracle could save her.

And then, as if it was a miracle, a distant cousin of her mother's, came from America to visit them. She lived in New York, in the Jewish community of Brownsville, Brooklyn. Lotte saw this as her way out, her escape. But would Aunt Rose be willing to let her accompany her to New York? Would her parents let her go?

She cornered Aunt Rose who was willing to take her along. Then, with great trepidation, she approached her parents. No, they said. It was out of the question. Lottie begged, cajoled, cried. But it was Rose who convinced her cousins that their daughter Lotte would be in an orthodox community and would be well taken care of...so why not send her along with her. Besides, Lottie could always return home. Finally, after much soul-searching, her parents gave in. That is how Lottie, in 1867, made her entrance into the United States and thus, many years later, by her own driving force for a better life, saved the lives of all her yet unborn descendants threatened by Hitler's killing rampage against all Jews in Germany, in Poland, and throughout all Europe, wherever they lived.

And now, in America, in the United States, in

Brownsville, Brooklyn, life wasn't much different from that in Jutroshin, helping her 'Aunt' at home and living in a very rigid orthodox environment. That's not why she had come to America, not what she wanted. Not with Manhattan--so near, so far--beckoning her. And so, strong-willed and determined, against Aunt Rose's wishes, Lottie took the ferry across the East River, went down to Manhattan's lower East Side where she got herself a job, learning to become a seamstress in a dress factory.

At first, she commuted daily from Brownsville to Manhattan and, after a long day's work, back home to Brownsville. Making friends with the girls on her work-floor, she decided to live in this teeming lively city of Manhattan, full of young people from all over the world. And so for seven years, never lonely and with no thought of returning home to the restricted life in Jutroshin.

And so it was that she fell in love with a young 25 year-old Englishman, a tailor in her factory. Grandma Lotte never told me why her husband Abe had left home for America. What she did tell me was that he loved the ladies. She had a hard time with it...and with accepting the fact that she was several years older than he. When I cam across their wedding certificate, dated 1874, I saw that she had lied about her age, making herself a few years younger than her husband. I guess at that time a girl was thought old at 25 years of age.

Their first child, Emily, was born December, 1875. When Lotte became pregnant again in 1877, they decided to visit their families whom they hadn't seen in 10 years. On their journey they stopped off in London where, in her eighth month of pregnanacy, she unexpectedly gave birth to Rose. The family remained in England until it was safe to travel on to Germany, with Milly 2 years old and baby Rose 1 month of age.

They had a great time in Germany. Everyone spoiled them, happy to have them back with the family. They tried to persuade Lotte to stay with them, make a new life for themselves there in Germany. At first she wavered, but the hustle and bustle of New York City which she and her husband loved, proved too great to deny. But if Germany was not for them, Lotte's parents argued, at least have that brand new life--their granddaughter Baby Rose--stay in their care. After much soul-searching, Lotte and Abe agreed, and so, without Baby Rose, returned to New York. In 1881 they once more made the trip to see their families and especially Rose, now three years old, who they decided to bring back to America. But because the child hardly knew who they were, Lotte's parents again prevailed to leave Rose with them. And again they agreed, Lotte already pregnant with her third child--Irene, born in New York City in 1882.

Lotte and Abe had moved into larger quarters, a cold-water flat, sharing a hallway toilet with their beighbors. In 1885, on the of the coldest of New York winters, Abe contracted pnuemonia, leading to his death at age 36. Granny Lotte blamed

the freezing hallway where everyone--man, woman, child--had to stand and wait their turn for use of that one toilet.

Widowed, Granny moved with her two children, Emily and Irene, into a two-storey house uptown on Second Avenue where she opened a candy-store downstairs on the street-level; she and the children living above it, upstairs. Shortly thereafter, Granny met the man who was to become my grandfather, Phillip Winterfeldt who, together with all his siblings, had left his hometown of Hindenburg, not far from Lotte's home in Germany. And now, here in New York City, Phillip, a young man, was already established in a haberdashery business with his brother.

Although Phillip was ten years younger than Granny--and despite the strong objections of his family, Phillip and Lotte were married in 1886. And their child Sadie born in 1887. Granny was disappointed, another girl! She had wanted a boy. And so--then it was--finally-at almost 40 years of age, she gave birth in 1889 to a boy!--a son!--her son--Sidney! He was the baby. His sisters--Milly 14, Reny 7 and Sadie 3--all adored their little brother. Although their mother spoiled him from the day he was born and through all the years of all their lives, they felt no jealousy, always protective of their baby-brother Sidney...the child who was to become my father.

And so it was that--Phillip's haberdashery business thriving--the family moved to East Harlem, at that time a predominantly white and Jewish section in New York City.

Emily--Milly--the eldest of the four girls in the family, blossomed into a young woman of beauty with a voice that promised operatic potential. Granny paid for all her singing and piano lessons, as well as piano lessons for Irene--Reny--and Sadie; all three girls becoming accomplished pianists, their talent and beauty, plus Milly's and Reny's height of 5',8"--radiating a majestic and seductive attraction to all.

Meanwhile, Granny's brothers Oswald and Jaques had gone into business in Germany. They opened a department store where merchandise could be bought on credit, a then unheard-of sales policy possessing such overwhelming customer appeal that the brothers opened one department store after the other throughout Germany. Needing trustworthy managers, all male relatives, including future in-laws, were given managerial positions along with the option to eventually buy the stores they managed and the building that housed them.

And so it was that my great-uncles Oswald and Jaques became millionaires and wrote to Granny to come back to Germany, promising "We'll make you rich."

Already in process of selling his interest in the haberdashery business to his partner, his brother, Grandpa Phillip and Grandma--after 33 years in America--both long dreaming of returning to the land of their birth and to their family--now had a most promising and persuasive reason to do so. Reason strong enough, too, to send Milly, her eldest daughter, on ahead

to relatives in Germany. After all, a girl in her twenties, it was time enough to find her a husband. Time, they would soon discover, that would bring them and their other children--Reny, Sadie and Sidney--fast over to Germany.

Until that time came to be, Milly's arrival triggered an explosion of joy in the family eagerly awaiting her. Neither she or her grandparents had seen each other since she was a little girl, nor had her 23-year old sister Rosie. Now, as years ago when her parents chose to take Emily back with them to America, leaving Rosie with the grandparents in Germany, she saw that Emily--grown into a beautiful young woman--still was the favored grandchild.

I don't know if Rosie ever forgave her mother, my grandmother, for being left with her grandparents in Germany while her parents lived far across the sea in America, then and now worlds apart. Or, now years later, jealous of the attention given her 'new' sister Emily. But swept up in the excitement of the welcoming parties, Rosie embraced her sister, as did Grandma's sister and brothers their new niece, all enfolding Emily into the heart of the family.

It was then that in the swirl of parties given her, Milly met not only the many eligible young men who courted her, but one particular man, the man who with his brother Jaques had promised to make her parents rich if they returned to Germany, a man twice her age, her blood relative Oswald. He who had

always been too occupied with ever-expanding business affairs to spend any time with his parents and relatives, suddenly found unlimited time to visit, court and fall in love with his startlingly beautiful niece Emily. And she with her handsome and wealthy Uncle Oswald--brother to her own mother. When Oswald announced that he planned to marry Emily, the family was shocked: "You are her uncle! She is your niece! It isn't done!"

And so the scandalous news brought Grandma, Grandpa Phillip and their children back to Germany, settling in Magdeburg. Oswald, who lived in Berlin, now hurried there to convince my grandparents of the love Milly and he had for each other; what a wonderful life she would have with him; it surely wouldn't be the first time that close relatives were joined in marriage.

"Close relatives!" Granny exploded. "You are my brother! She is your niece! I won't allow it! No!"

And that was the end of it.

Oswald never got married.

Soon thereafter--in an arranged marriage--the beautiful Milly at the age of 25 became the wife of the plain-looking but well-to-do Sigmund Heppner.

. . .

Grandma's return to Germany with all her family, brought great joy to Rosie. Not only in seeing her mother again but meeting her younger sisters: Reny, 18 years old and Sadie, 13; as well as her brother Sidney who was 11. And, for the first

time, her step-father Phillip. But for Reny, the most exciting thing of all was the moment--at sister Milly's marriage to Sigmund Heppner--when she met her second-cousin Alfred Tuch. A very magical moment for both. For, not long after--in 1903--they married. Subsequently, they took over two of Jaques' stores in Frankfurt-am-Main. From the moment they met--and wed, they were in love with each other 'til he died thirty-two years later, in 1934.

After all these years, of all the things that happened, one thing remains unanswered in my mind: How did my Grandma Lotte and Grandpa Phillip afford to marry off four daughters? Could it be that all those stores their sons-in-law took over were part of the dowry they received? At that time, a girl couldn't get married without a dowry -- which would also include dishes, linens, furniture, table silver and a variety of other household furnishings and necessities. How did Lotte and Philip manage to so provide for all their four daughters? All I know is that they did.

I don't know too much about Rosie, second eldest of the four daughters, and her husband Alex. But meeting their son Alvin a few times when he visited family in Magdeburg, I learned that Rosie, his mother, had died of an embolism in 1937. Shortly thereafter, Alvin decided to emigrate to British-mandated Palestine, acquiring the precious certificate to do so from a Zionist organization. On his way there, he stopped off

in Holland to meet up with a pen-pal, a woman he had never met, Erna. And so it happened that when thye met, it was love at first sight....a nd so got married. Luckily, Alvin's certificate to immigrate to Palestine specifically permitted two people, a married couple, to do so. Because of that, Erna was able to accompany her husband Alvin into Palestine.

Taking advatange of such a highly valuable certificate, marriage often was a metter of form: single men and women got married outside Palestine, then--once inside--divorced. But not Alvin and Erna who, after thirteen years of marriage, were overjoyed to learn that, finally, Erna was pregnant. But only a few months later, that joy was struck a fatal blow when Alvin, on duty as a policeman, riding his motorcycle down the sharply curving roads from Jerusalem to Tel Aviv, had a fatal accident resulting in his death at age 39. The shock caused Erna to lose her unborn child. The grief at the unbearable loss of both husband and child caused her to leave what now was become the independent State of Israel. And as for Alex, husband of Aunt Rosie, he died in the 1940's in the Holocaust.

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While on vacation in Wiesbaden, a spa near Frankfurt, my grandparents bought an apartment complex there that actually comprised five buildings: the one facing the street held the most expensive apartments, while the other four surrounded the

courtyard. They purchased this complex of properties with U.S. dollars, the exchange value than, I believe, being six marks to the dollar. Oswald and Jaques didn't have to make my grandparents rich, they were already well-to-do. Just the income from their properties afforded them a highly comfortable way of life.

Milly's husband Sigmund took over four furniture stores in Hamburg from the man denied his niece's heart--Uncle Oswald. Here in this great port city, Milly and Sigmund settled down, had three children: Ada, Erwin and Herbert. Milly continued with her voice lessons. Her teachers told her that she was ready to sing opera professionally. But her husband wouldn't allow it, his reason being that it was beneath their social position for his wife to perform publicly at the Opera House, except when she sang for their high-society guests invited to the weekly salon held in their grand home. There, men fell in love with Milly, this tall beauty with the voice of an angel. One man actually killed himself out of his unrequited love for her.

In the erotically exciting world carried on within the protective walls of their home, Milly--although increasingly dependent on the life of luxury afforded by her husband Sigmund--behaved the not unwilling target of other men's eyes and desires, her favors graciously bestowed on them, but not on her husband who desperately sought and needed it for himself. And so, in

the economic crash that rocked Germany in 1923, fearing he would lose his wife along with his money, Sigmund Heppner killed himself.

Milly, whose life of pleasure and ease had depended on the tolerance and financial largesse of her late husband, now--a widow at 47 years of age--had to struggle on alone to carry on the business of the stores and her life. But as with her sisters Reny and Rose and their husbands Alfred and Alex, a bankrupt nation impoverished them all, except for Sadie and David who managed to keep their business afloat.

Our German currency was devalued over and over again where in the end a single loaf of bread which originally had cost only a small part of one mark now cost thousands of marks. There were no customersfor the goods my aunts and uncles had on display in their stores. Somehow they hung on in there, selling their jewelry, mortgaging their homes. Even Grandma and Grandpa had to mortgage their business properties to survive the crash engulfing Germany, yet managed to hold on to their furniture stores--only while Grandpa was still running them "with Dad's help". Due to the shortage of food and not enough money to buy what there was, my brother Rolf and I developed rickets. Luckily, my father, with the help of orthopedic doctors, enabled us to avert serious bone disease from developing. For years, the special shoes covering our ankles had to be custom-made.

Grandma chided her daughters and sons-in-law, who now came to her for financial help, for their former free-spending ways in better times; reproved them for their thoughtless lack of attention to business: what kind of businessman was Alex--always going fishing! What about Milly, still spending money on her lavish soirées while neglecting the stores! And Reny and Alfred indulging themselves, traveling the spas all over Europe. But there was no scolding, no words of recrimination from Grandma concerning her beloved son Sidney who was continuing to live in high comfort, spending his time in pleasures he felt essential to his life, part of his heritage from the very day of his birth--as befitted the sole male heir to the Winterfelt name, decreed by fate to perpetuate its bloodline.

. . .

As it had been between Aunt Milly and Sigmund Heppner--an arranged marriage, so too between Aunt Sadie and David Shlein. The furniture store was her dowry. My father was furious. He'd always had his eye on this store. The very next day after the wedding, Uncle David called my grandparents, accused them of I know not what. Much later, Uncle David bought the building from my grandparents. It became a Department Store. He became a millionaire.

They had a son, Helmar. He was to learn the trade and take over the business--so his father David planned. But Helmar proved totally unsuited for it, his father putting him down constantly. In the end, in 1936, it was decided to send Helmar to the United States with forty thousand dollars--one could still take money out of Germany--to open a knitting factory in Wisconsin.

Uncle David and Aunt Sadie owned a beautiful house in an exclusive neighborhood in Magdeburg. Their daughter Irmy, who had completed high school in Germany and finishing school in Switzerland, now lived with them and worked as her father's assistant in his department store. One evening, while Aunt Sadie was out, Brownshirts--S.A. men--entered the house. Uncle David was frozen with fear, his daughter Irmy alone upstairs in her room. The Brownshirts stomped through the house, randomly searching with no apparent purpose, one of them calling out how cute Irmy was, but leaving her alone. Coming down the stairs, they made themselves comfortable in the living room, made David serve them drinks whatever and as much as they wanted. Fianlly, the ordeal came to an end. Leaving, they promised they'd be back: "You got good booze. There better be plenty when we return."

The next day David had three kinds of different locks installed at the front and back entrances. And, finally, in the middle of the staircase leading upstairs, he placed an iron

door. The house was a fortress. But now David wondered what those Brownshirts would do if, when they returned, they couldn't enter. Burn the house down? He went to work, worrying. He came home, worrying. Became despondent. Sold his business. Sold his house. Moved the family to Berlin. Couldn't forget the night of the break-in. He decided to visit the United States, booking passage for himself, his wife Sadie, his daughter Irmy. They visited Helmar in Wisconsin. And toured the United States, a land that excited Uncle David with its tremendous range of money-making opportunities.

On their return to Germany, he was full of plans about a future in the United States, Wondering whether his feelings had any foundation in fact or due to wife Sadie's and daughter Irmy's fluency in English that made the American future look so promising. He decided to find out for himself. And immediately booked passage--without wife and daughter and their fluency in English--to New York. But once there, alone, it was a shock to him that he wouldn't dare venture into business in the strange new world that was New York--not at fifty years of age and no hope in learning a new language. Returning home to Germany, he found the present foreboding, the future threatening, and his own past an illusion that had never been. Overwhelmed by a chaos that was closing in on him--and no protective locks and iron doors to keep it out, he struggled against the silence and the horror that was engulfing him, and it was then that in

the night before the day his beloved daughter Irmy was to return from London where she'd been studying dance, fearing to enfold her in his welcoming embrace lest his demons envelop them both, he strangled his demons by hanging himself.

And so it was that Irmy who came home looking forward to seeing her father once again, never did ever seen him again, and never ever got over his death--and the manner of it. And it was too that Uncle David who bitterly saw his son Helmar fail in the knitting-mill business never lived to see him serve in the U.S. Army in WW IIm graduate the renowned Massachussetts Institude of Technology an electrical engineer whose creative brilliance was revealed by his work on the Minute Man, inventingparts for rockets and missiles, becoming a civilian advisor to the U.S. Army in Kaiserlautern (K-Town) in Germany and, back in the United States, one of the nation's top consultants in the field of rocketry: theory, design and engineering. And so it was: father and son, a reversal in fortune that the father was fated never to see. And it was in later years, Helmar--who then had two sons--told me that he would never influence them about anything they wanted or didn't want to do.

. . .

My father Sidney Winterfelt married Bertha Herz, my mother--whom I don't remember. She grew up in Mönchen-Gladbach, a town known today mainly for its famous soccer team. Her mother

died at an early age. My mother Bertha, together with her sister Alma and brother Paul, lived with their father and step-mother.

Alma had married Isaak Brock who lived with his family in Düsseldorf. Meanwhile, my father's sister Rose had married Alex Brock, brother of Alma's husband Isaak. Rose and Alma now lived in Düsseldorf. The two of them arranged for Rose's brother Sidney to meet Alma's sister, Bertha. And so, my parents-to-be were married, living in Magdeburg. My brother Rolf was born September, 1917. Grandmother's joy knew no bounds: now, through her son and her son's son--her grandson!--the Winterfelt name and lineage would continue through all the generations to come. And so it was that in all the years of my youth, she and my father--Poppi--spoiled Rolf which wasn't hard to do, since he was such an endearing and outgoing young boy who could charm his way, without even trying, into everyone's heart. Including mine.

And--so--then it was that while on summer vacation with the family, my mother, 2 years after Rolf's birth and 10 months after mine, pregnant again and in her fifth month, decided to have an abortion...without Dad's knowledge.

She died of peritonitis, August 8, 1919.

She was 28 years old.

Why did my mother do it?

. . .

My mother and father lived an upper middle-class life. They had a maid, and a nanny for their children--Rolf and me.

My father was hard to live with: that explosive temper of his. Could that have been the reason for the abortion? I'll never know. But whatever the reason, Grandfather Herz--my mother's father--washed his hands of our family, would have nothing to do with them. And so we never met anyone of my mother's family. But why did he never invite Rolf and me?

Every big holiday all of Dad's family--wherever they lived in Germany--came on a visit to Magdeburg. I was always eager to see Aunt Rose and Uncle Alex Brock. They lived in Düsseldorf near my mother's sister Alma Brock. And so Aunt Rose was well-informed about the Herz family. I overheard an adult conversation that Uncle Paul Herz lived in Cologne; that he owned a flower shop; that he had a retarded daughter. That entire family died in the Holocaust.

Aunt Alma had two sons, my cousins Heinz and Werner. At the time when I moved to Berlin, I was 17 years old, and heard that Werner Brock also lived in Berlin. I was anxious to meet him. Aunt Rose gave me his phone number. Unfortunately, whenever I called, he was in Düsseldorg. And when he returned to Berlin, I was visiting in Magdeburg. So I never met him in Germany, always anxious to find him, someday, somewhere--wherever life led him, and me...

Many years passed before I heard that Heinz and Werner were living in Israel. Still later, I heard that Heinz, a kibutznik, was shot dead while on guard duty. His kibutz erected a memorial in memory of their beloved comrade.

In 1963 I went to Israel, set out determined to find Werner, a search that was to take years. Finally, in 1968, friends of mine placed an advertisement in an Israeli newspaper, asking for information that could lead to finding my cousin Werner.

When told by a friend--who had seen the notice--that a Ruth Winterfelt was seeking to locate him, Werner was not impressed. After all, the search for surviving relatives of the Holocaust who might be living in Israel had too often proved a disappointment for all concerned. And so it was that a cynical Werner Brock told his friend that "she can call me," adding flatly: "--but I'm not her cousin." Yet, nevertheless, permitted that his telephone number be passed on to me.

And so that's the way it was. I phoned. I identified myself. But before I could say anything else, Werner adamantly kept insisting that I wasn't his cousin, not letting me get a world in edgewise. But, finally, I did cut through his words of denial by imploring him to "--please give me a minute to explain."

"Go ahead," he said. "Explain."

"Your mother was Alma Herz?" I said.

"Yes," he said.

"She had a sister Bertha Herz?" I said.

"Yes," he said.

And I said: "I am the daughter of Bertha."

Then, after a long moment of silence, the voice of Werner Brock came burning through the telephone: "You are my cousin!"

We arranged to meet. I wondered whom he resembled. Would he look like my brother Rolf? I wanted him to look like a Herz...but he looked like a Brock. Not tall, but sexy, and with a wonderful sense of humor.

Soon I met the family: his wife Gisela; Alon, their son; Shuli, their daughter. I was so happy. They were my family on my mother's side. Gisela became my good friend. I spent many happy hours in their home.

Werner, a heavy smoker, died of emphysema in 1982. I miss him. Alon got married to Racheli: they have three children. Shuli married Yossi Cohen: they have two children.

And so it was that my fierce search to find maternal kin provided me the deepesr happiness, as also it did for Werner and his family. To this day, we are very close to each other.

. . .

With my mother's death, my father--a widower at 30 years of age--was overwhelmed with caring for a son, Rolf, not yet 2 years of age and an infant daughter, myself, 10 months old.

My Grandma Lottie was 70 years of age, too old to help care for us. Aunt Reny and Uncle Alfred who were childless, wanted to adopt me. But Dad said "You take both or none." Aunt Reny, in her thirties, worried if she could handle two such small children, decided not to. Our lives would have been so totally different. Uncle Alfred would have adored us. To this day--though both long dead--I still love them, my Aunt Reny and Uncle Alfred.

And so it was that my Dad engaged a houskeeper-companion, a Hausdame, usually an educated but impoverished lady, who oversees the smooth running of the household and the efficient handling of the children with their school work and music lessons; as well as their conduct and their manners, in and out of the home. She also is a companion, in this case, to my father; sharing the many privileges of the family's social life provided by him: vacationing, traveling, attending theatre and concerts.

Our first Hausdame--the first of many--was Fraulein Menzel. Nobody ever knew her first name. When she had been with us for about four years, my grandparents finally prevailed on my father, their son, to remarry, arranging for him to meet a friend of Aunt Milly's, a Hulda Lewin from Hamburg. And so, the decision made, when Dad informed our Hausdame that he was about to remarry and no longer would require her services, an hysteric Fraulein Menzel exploded with shock, pleading with him, screaming and yelling, running out of our apartment upstairs and downstairs, neighbors opening their doors, witnessing this spectacle, hearing her voice shrill with her pain and her accusations of the man

to whom she'd "--given four years of my life...couldn't have managed without me...look! look! look at me!...how good I've been to his children...No! No! No! I'm not going to leave! Never!..."

Our house was bedlam. Dad tried to reason with her. The police came, had to forcibly remove her.

Rolf and I didn't miss her. She had been very strict and unloving.

And so when Dad married Hulda--whom Rolf and I soon came to love, our house became a home filled with hugs and kisses. Every Sunday morning we tiptoed into their room to see if they were awake. And if they were, jumped into their bed, onto the featherbeds, rolling and tumbling around in their warmth and the enveloping love from Hulda, our stepmother; all of us having a great time, laughing and shouting with the fun of it, the joy.

Yet it came to an end.

It happened. Little by little. Things we couldn't grasp or didn't see or didn't understand. Whatever, things were changing. And so, without any sense of what was causing it, after one-and-a-half years of marriage, Hulda and Dad were divorced. Rolf and I were desolate.

And so now again it was that a new <u>Hausdame</u>, the second one, came into my life, into our house with its two bedrooms; Rolf sharing the master bedroom with Dad, and I my room with

this new lady....and the next new lady and the next and the next and the next, on and on, a parade of Hausdamen, eighteen of them in fifteen years. And during those years only two maids to take care of the house: the cleaning-laundering-cooking-serving.

Again and again, we went to the train station with Dad, to pick up the new prospective Hausdame, every single one of them tall, blond, goodlooking. Some lasted four days, some one year.

Rolf and I knew we could never allow ourselves to love any one of these ladies. For no matter how nice they were, we didn't know how much time they'd be with us before they left, disappearing out of our lives before we even knew they were gone. And so it was that I built a shell around myself, living in a dream world where nothing could touch me, not even physical punishment, nothing; nothing and no one would I allow to penetrate my walled labyrinth of protection.

I trusted no one...except Rolf.

Thereafter--into my adult life--I could not give myself to anyone completely, even if I loved them. Always expecting rejection, fearing abandonment--real or imagined, I was ever ready to withdraw from their life before they withdrew from mine. I couldn't allow myself to be at the mercy of someone else's emotions. I had to survive.

The cost of this was devastating: the hurt and the

loneliness I experienced so many times through those years of my youth; the fear of growing up, moving into the next phase of my life--not out of choice but out of '<u>Must</u>'; waiting for the fear to subside, hanging in to survive; faith in God--"my other Father"--carrying me through the months and years with all those uncaring strangers.

. . .

Dad ran two furniture stores. Because he hardly ever paid any attention to them, by 1930 he went into bankruptcy. Grandma paid for that, as she also had paid for his divorce from my stepmother Hulda.

Grandma owned a large business property in the commercial center of Magdeburg. And with Grandfather retiring, made Dad the manager of her real estate holdings, providing her beloved son a munificent salary from the income pf the second-floor of her Magdeburg property, thus affording us the means to live in the grand manner.

Grandma doted on her son from the moment of his birth, spoiling him for all his years to come. Dad's life now was filled with never-ending days-weeks-months of pleasure. He became a playboy, with a routine of exciting varieties and delights. He adored women. He loved to dance. He was a sportsman, winning prizes tobogganing at the famous wintersport spas of Germany and Switzerland. He loved boxing and wrestling,

a great fan who attended all these events, welcoming into our home the champion athletes to enjoy both his hospitality and admiration of their preeminent skills.

When at home, his life really began late afternoons. He never got up before 10 in the morning, when the barber came in to shave him. At breakfast, Dad was always served caviar and anchovies, a never-failing delight to his gourmet tastes. Then around 11 in the morning, the business affairs of his stores still not attended to, Dad sometimes had me accompany him to his office, where I enjoyed spinning around on the high stools there, but especially standing awestruck--looking up at the great ledgers that impressively lined the office.

During the brief time he spent there, Dad would greet his employees, pleasantly ask if everything was going along well... and--punctually at 1 p.m.--leave for the sumptuous dinner awaiting him at home.

Dad tried to be a good father. But he had a terrible temper. When he flew into a rage--sudden, unaccountable--he lost total control of himself. During mealtimes, he evidenced an obsessive concern that we eat with good manners. If we didn't come up to his criterion of what was correct, he hit us with a thin birch cane across the tips of our fingers. It hurt so. I never enjoyed a meal at a restaurant or hotel for fear that I was not behaving properly.

There would be times when Rolf used to forget to flush the

toilet. And always I would forget to take a hankie. And so, every time we forgot, we were penalized to write over and over again for one-hundred times what we were supposed to do--and what not to forget, Dad in the punishing role of a Prussian feldwebel (sergeant). Drill-Drill-Drill, drilling all the German upper-class culture-values-education into us, instructing us how to do things properly, exactly how to conduct ourselves. In his mind, he did everything a father should do for his children, but I hardly remember any affection. Once, many years later, Rolf said to me: "Why did Poppi never love you?" Perhaps my withdrawl into myself was too much for him to cope with...and so he too withdrew?

Not only did he instruct his children exactly how to do things 'properly', but taught every hausdame exactly how to season different foods, though he had never learned to cook. We ate game boar brains, and oxtail and turtle soups. Later in life when I realized what I had eaten in my earliest years, I became squeamish and never ate them again. Rolf and I didn't realize that we ate differently than most people. And lived differently. We were not allowed to wash dishes or even iron hankies: what was Dad paying the help for? But when he went on his trips, we enjoyed plain foods, and did all the things forbiden us when Dad was around.

Yet there were pleasant times with Dad. Every evening after supper, he played games with us. And only after Rolf and

I went to bed, did Dad and his companion go out for the night. On Fridays, after dinner, he'd return home from his walk with 'Eddy'--our whippet dog, then out of his pocket would produce ten little white bags filled with all kinds of candy, emptying them into a big bowl. Rolf and I never had enough: kids set loose in a candy store.

We had a great street life. Rolf and Karli--our friend--were very inventive. We played great games. At home in the winter, we poured water on the outside balcony floor over and over again until it froze and then, the ice thick and hard, we skated on it. But when Rolf and I got a wonderful present from Uncle David--a bicycle for each of us, I looked forward to the end of winter to bicycle into the warm weather of Spring and Summer. And especially Fall. For it was then that I biked to the cemetery, sat at my mother's grave...where I played with the fallen chestnuts on the ground.

. . .

When I was a child, Magedburg had 300,000 inhabitants. In the center of its spacious Town Hall Square was--and is--a great imposing statue of its most illustrious forebear, the acclaimed 17th-century physicist Otto von Guericke who, in 1650, invented the first air pump, its principles vital for today's understanding and mastering of atmospheric pressure.

In the outlying areas that lay beyond the Town Square, people were primarily occupied with raising beets for sugar, cabbage for sauerkraut, cucumbers for pickles, and potatoes and onions. Unlike von Guericke who studied law at the universities of Leipzig and Jena and mathematics at the Leiden University, many of these people were unable to attend school beyond the first eight grades and so were poorly educated; continuing on to middle and high schools an impossibility due to a lack of money needed for tuition.

The inner city had lovely parks. One of them held many graves, marked with plaques set in the grass and around the walkways, a place where children played and people sat on benches. I wish all cemeteries would be like that: life and death so closely bound up.

In the early days we owned a horse, His name was 'Bobby'. He was not a riding horse. We had a dog-cart and a landau that was an open surrey. Rolf and I loved the dog-cart, a light two-wheeled carriage in which Bobby took us for rides. Being stabled nearby, we visited him, treating him with carrots and cubes of sugar.

Later, Grandma bought one of the first motor cars, the Benz. Every year in Spring, we drove with out grandparents to the Harz mountains, to Bad Harzburg. We loved it there. Rolf and I would lie down on the grass and roll down the hills, over and over again. There were brooks tumbling over stones and

around boulders. We spent a lot of time jumping from stone to stone, getting sprayed, having lots of fun. Climbing up the mountain we stopped on a ledge that held a sennhütte, a small cabin offering refreshments where we could get delicious hot chocolate and cookies. And which also sold a coveted souvenir: a tiny metal medallion marked with the name of the mountain climbed--the very one we were on--to be stuck, by means of the tiny sharp prongs on its back, onto our sturdy walking canes. Eventually, these rustic walking sticks--glinting with medallions all over its gnarled body--proudly proclaimed that its owner had climbed this mountain, visited that town, been here-there-everywhere, the name of the place prominently marked on each of the multi-colored medallions, all making the walking cane a shining accumulations of one's travels.

In the afternoons there was also an outdoor concert, along with more hot chocolate for us and wonderful cakes. In the evenings, my grandmother who always brought her own special little teapot--having been married to an Englishman--brewed tea for us. Meanwhile, my father went to the dances. If there was a dance contest, he and Rolf usually won prizes.

In summer, we went to Nordenei on the North Sea or to Swinemunde on the Baltic Sea. Other times, Dad went along on cruises, and enjoyed winter sports.

Dad had season tickets at the Magdeburg City Theatre. Here plays and operas used our town as a theatrical springboard,

priming themselves for the great leap forward to the stages in Frankfurt A.M. and finally Berlin, capital city and cultural center of Germany. And so it was that we got to see very fine performances of actors and singers. Dad was an opera buff. Occasionally he sent Rolf and me to attend the lighter works. Dad had the loge next to that of the Stage Manager. Since most of the action was on the left side and the center of the stage, Dad's loge provided a clear and unobstructed view of the exciting spectacle below us.

We got dressed-up in our best clothes. I wore white gloves and Mary Jane shoes. Always, right there in front of us, perched on the ledge of our loge, was a tiny box of chocolates. We were always thrilled. I still love opera today--and chocolates.

At home we had a gramophone. All the records were of classical music. Many times in the afternoon I sat in an easy chair and listened...until it was dusk. The rooms of our apartment were tremendously large. There was no such thing as a living-room. The dining room had a table that, when extended, seated twenty-four people. At night, we played ping-pong on it. The buffet took up a whole wall. By the windows near the balcony stood two wicker chairs with a round wicker table between them. At the other end of the room was a rocking chair. This belonged to our dog 'Eddie', a whippet. He could run like the wind. He also clawed into two of our upholstered chairs and I remember kapok hanging out of the back part of the seats. Why didn't

Poppi punish the dog?

The den also had a table and four comfortable chairs. All the furniture was black. The bookcase held many books. I was an early reader, spending many hours exploring fantastic worlds. In two corners of the den were upholstered chairs, one standing by the heavily draped window, a humidor of cigars dominant on a table in front of it, its top of hammered brass. And suspended underneath, a glass container holding lighters and all the essentials for relaxed smoking.

A desk on the other side of the window held a telephone which was connected to the home of my grandparents. My father called his parents many times during the day.

Extended from the third corner was a lounge with a Persian carpet draped over it. The floor held a heavy Indian rug.

I loved that room. In spite of its size, it was cozy. I was never lonely there. It was a retreat filled with warmth, books and music--a magical room that became even more magical at Christmas time. Especially during one particular Christmas vacation when Poppi was going away for a few days. Two of our favorite cousins--17-year old Herbert from Hamburg and 16-year old Alvin from Dusseldorf--were coming to visit, Poppi having them to stay with us kids during his absence. Not only would they be seeing us but also have the opportunity of visiting the other members of our family living here in Magdeburg. All this was to prove an exciting time, not only for both Rolf who was

9 years old and for me--one year younger, but for Elsie, the maid, oldest of all, in her early Thirties.

The first to arrive was Herbert. He greeted Rolf, kissed me warmly, swung me around, then put me down again. He then proceeded to do the same to Elsie whom he had never met before. She blushed, giggled, scolded. But one could see she was pleased.

The bell rang. In came Alvin. When he saw Herbert, he threw his arms around him and they shook hands so fiercely, so enthusiastically, I surely though their arms were coming off.

I showed them to Poppi's bedroom. It had a beautiful mahogany bedroom set. On the beds were big featherbed which when fluffed up looked like white clouds. They were wonderful to sleep under, retaining the body heat. The dresser had a marble top with old-fashioned wash-basins and pitchers on top. We used them every morning to get washed. Herbert and Alvin were delighted. They drew lots as to who was going to sleep on which bed. As for Rolf, he would be sleeping in my room--in the Hausdame's bed, she being on vacation, both of us anxious for the next morning.

We got up bright and early so not to miss anything, but the boys slept until eleven. Then the fun began. We knocked at their door and went in. Both of them were washing themselves vigorously, splashing each other boisterously. When they finished, they opened the window, took their basins and poured

the dirty water down into the street. Just at that moment, Elsie came in, scolded and hollered that such a thing wasn't done, her words of shock and disapproval going on and on. But never stopping the antics of Herbert and Alvin who whooped and screamed an Indian dance around her, locking her in their encircling arms, bouncing her up and down, then giving her a little push towards the door, told her to make breakfast, call them when it was ready. Meanwhile the mischievous spirit in them still unspent, they carried Rolf and me on their shoulders, planted us in the big empty flower boxes that were hanging down over the street below, leaving us there alone and helpless--while they went down to the warm kitchen to joke around with Elsie as she prepared breakfast.

It was cold, dangerous, frightening. But short as the time may have been in those boxes, it was far too long to be measured. Finally, Herbert and Alvin came back, lifted us up out of the boxes, took us down to have breakfast with them...then left the house. We didn't see them again until the next morning, when they repeated the whole performance of the day before. Meanwhile, Elsie had cooked potatoes in their jackets for potato salad. The bottle of vinegar and the canister filled with sugar stood on the table nearby as she was peeling the potatoes. At this point, Herbert and Alvin strolled into the kitchen. They each took a potato and started eating, then another and another.

"You just had breakfast!" Elsie scolded them. "I need

the potatoes for salad!"

Alvin looked sternly at Herbert. "Stop eating the potatoes!" he ordered Herbert and, winking, leered at him. "She needs those potatoes for salad!" And Herbert hooted right back at him, "Stop eating them, yourself!" Then, without another world, they took their half-eaten potatoes and rubbed them into each other's hair. Not satisfied with that, they pushed Elsie into a corner, out of their way, and the fight between the boys began and did not end until there were no potatoes left--all gone. When it was all over, kitchen and cousins were a sight, telling Elsie to stop her scolding and hollering or else they'd put water into the sugar cannister. Hysterically, she rattled on. And splash! went a pitcher of water into the cannister of sugar, Elsie screaming "Get out of here! What will you think of next! You are corrupting these children! Get out! Get out! They'll never be the same!"

And so now it was their last evening. Poppi was coming back that night, the boys leaving before he arrived. We kissed them goodbye, and went to bed.

I was drowsy, ready to fall asleep, when I felt the foot-end of my featherbed lifting. I didn't dare move. Then!--going back down! Had I just imagined it? Slowly I relaxed, ready to fall asleep again. Then slowly, slowly, my featherbed once more began to rise. Horrified, I jumped out of bed, ran across the room, pulled open the door. There they stood, the culprits--

Herbert and Alvin--wildly laughing at what they had done. They had taken a strong thread, attached one end to my featherbed and--because my bed was near the door--fixed the thread across the upper edge of the door and down the other side, into their hands. And so it had been easy for them to fool me, scare me. I could have killed them. But their laughing faces wiped that feeling out of me, instead had me laughing with them. And suddenly, there it was, the sound of the doorbell! And there he was--Poppi! There was a great joyous hello...and a last goodbye.

Now that the boys had left, we were all breathing easier. Poppi was tired and so were we. Back to bed for all of us. I snuggled under my still warm featherbed. Nothing would disturb me now. I closed my eyes, drowsing off. Then--CRASH! A terrific noise! It had come from Poppi's room! Rolf and I jumped out of bed. Elsie came running. We opened the door. There was Poppi on the floor. The bed had collapsed as he had gotten in to go to sleep!

All in all, that Christmas vacation was an especially happy one--never to be forgotten--as all Christmases had been and would be. And knew no reason to think that such a happy time of year would ever stop...a time when the Christmas tree stood in the corner by the window. We all helped trim it. Many of the things hanging on it were chocolate nonpareils, gingerbread cookies and other wonderful things to nibble and

eat, except the candles which were real. On one end of the wall a multicolored string was suspended with little packages dangling from it. On the other end of the wall, the same. Every day one week before Christmas, when we got up in the morning, we were allowed to open up one of the little treats. On Christmas eve, we opened the presents. There was always a big plate filled with all kinds of fruit, nuts, cookies and candies for each one of us. And, in addition, I usually got a book and, with it, immediately sank into a chair, oblivious to the world, reading.

The dinner that night was always carp blue with horseradish sauce. By putting vinegar into fish water, the carp turned blue. The horseradish was mixed with heavy cream with thin bits of boiled potatoes. Christmas day, it was roast goose with red cabbage and potato dumplings and--wow!--we kids were allowed to drink a small glass of malaga wine.

New Year's Day, my father never went out. My grandparents came to visit. Again it was carp for dinner. This time the scales of the fish were dried on a piece of newspaper. At night everyone received a few of the scales to put into their wallets, a talisman to insure that one always had money the following year. And with pieces of lead--bought for the occasion--we partly melted each piece, one at a time, and then poured it on a cold surface. The resultant design was to suggest a happy portent for the new year. Jelly donuts were a must also.

Many bakers, by request, put mustard into their centers, all in fun for New Year's Eve. At 12 midnight, we drank champagne and then went to bed. 1932-1933 was our last New Year's Eve together. I was 14, Rolf 15. Shortly thereafter, Hitler came to power.

Karli, who was our best friend, became a Hitler-youth. After all the years we'd been friends together, he called us Dirty Jews, and completely separated himself from us. Meanwhile in school, one girl who had made me miserable for years with her anti-Semitism, suddenly started to get friendly with me. I found out that her family had leftist inclinations--and now she was on the other end of the scale.

In May, 1933, 'Eddy', our dog, got sick and died. Dad locked himself in the den and didn't come out all day. That was a side of our father that Rolf and I never knew. He really loved that dog. Worse yet, two weeks later, Grandpa Phillip suffered a stroke, a blow that rocked Dad, struck harder still when soon after, in June, Grandpa died. Thinking back, I can't believe how unthinking, how uncaring Rolf and I were, totally unaware of our father's grief.

Both Rolf and I felt badly about the death of Grandpa who always had been so loving of us. But we were not grieving. Life went on as usual. Yet only a month later, first Rolf, then I, left our father's house and moved to Hamburg. Had we stayed or had I stayed, my father would not have been picked

up by the Nazis, arrested and locked into concentration camp for breaking Hitler-Germany's law of rassenschande: 'shaming the race'. For, without his children living with him under his roof, and so a hausdame considered unnecessary to the maintenance of the household--my father was condemned for contaminating the pure German race for living alone under one roof with a Christian woman.

. . .

One warm day in June, my brother Rolf and I got on our bikes and went to an outdoor pool. This pool was called "New World", and it really was. I never saw anything like it again. It was so large that the logs that floated in it seemed not to take up any room at all. The water was from the river Elbe so that one felt that one was swimming in a natural environment. What fun we had with those logs. It was my first experience flirting and dilly-dallying around with some boys. My brother kept telling me that we must leave to be home on time for supper. It was an absolute rule that we be home by 7 p.m. I finally tore myself away.

We were late. The whole way back we made up stories why we were not on time. My father was so angry he didn't let us explain. He moved in on me...he was going to hit me. Why me? I don't know. Rolf, tall and gangly, leaned against the doorpost and said Don't hit her! Dad didn't listen. Don't hit her! Rolf

repeated, a threat in his voice. Dad looked at him, then let me go. Frustrated, unbelieving Rolf's threatening him and he --his father--having given in to that threat, his fury held no bounds! All through supper, Poppi kep berating his beloved son, Rolf. And on through the night, sleeping in the same room, there was no end to his accusations. I am sure Poppi regretted his outbursts. Had Rolf returned, I am sure they would have made up. They loved each other. But they never saw each other again. I know that Rolf has regrets. As do I.

Next morning we went to school, Rolf on his bike. When I returned home, he was not there. Three days went by and we didn't hear from him. He had taken his bike, slept in rat-infested barns and finally arrived in the city of Hamburg. That was about a 5-hour train ride from Magdeburg. He found his way to cousins of ours, who in turn called us. My father told Meinhart to bring Rolf back home. And once here, Rolf told my Dad that he wanted to stay in Hamburg. My father haggled with Meinhart about how much he would have to pay for Rolf's keep and then they returned to Hamburg.

Our house was very quiet.

My Aunt Milly who was staying with her sister Sadie was shortly leaving for Hamburg where she also lived. I told my Dad that I also wanted to live there. Dad said If you leave, you can never come back.

I wanted to be with my brother. I left.

Dad kept his word.

. . .

Later, when I returned to Magdeburg, I lived with my grandmother. Meinhart and Ada--Aunt Milly's daughter--had an 8-year old son Werner and had just given birth to Ralph. Meinhart had worked in a big Department store. When he was promoted to Buyer, they decided to have another baby. Hitler came to power and Meinhart was let go because he was Jewish. They were destitute. Dad's payment for Rolf's keep now paid for the rent. Meinhart was peddling socks from house to house. What we ate for dinner depended on the money he brought home. If there was enough, 8-year old Werner would ride his bike to the Port to buy fish, cheap but wonderfully fresh. If there wasn't enough money we would have a thick bean soup, filling and delicious. Rolf and I didn't feel deprived. It was a loving family. No maids, no housekeepers, no money, but there was something we had never known: a mother--and a father interacting with her and all who lived with them.

I basked in the great warmth of these people.

Unfortunately, I couldn't stay with them very long. When my cousin Ada's brother Herbert decided to emigrate to Morocco, Aunt Milly, his mother, then moved in with us, with Meinhart and Ada. And so, not enough room to accomodate all of us, I moved in with Ada's other brother Erwin--and wife Carola and

their 2-year old daughter Ruth. Because they were financially badly off, they decided to enigrate to Palestine. They left at the end of September, 1933. And found in British-mandated Palestine, economic conditions worse than they had left in Germany. Carola, 8-months pregant, could not work. And Erwin couldn't find a job. He had worked in his father-in-law's insurance business, but not too successfully.

Erwin, Herbert and Ada were ill-equipped for the struggles of life, being raised by their mother Milly as young gentlemen and Ada as a young lady having her own companion. They had no profession, no trade. Erwin was artistic, a dreamer.

Carola gave birth to a boy. He was sickly. He died after 5 months. Carola, a trained X-ray technician, unable to find work for her special skills, had to go into domestic service, Erwin working at whatever he could find. Although talented as an artist and skilled as a quality cabinet maker, he earned far too little to support wife and child. Desperate with their financial situation, he joined the British Army as a civilian-carpenter, traveling with them through all the regions of Palestine; seldom home, suffering these absences from his family. Carola finally was hired at a hospital for the insane. She became the valued assistant to the chief doctor, working there until her retirement. In 1944, Erwin got sick with pnuemonia, so sic

he had to be hospitalized, Carola visitng him as often as her free time allowed. One day, from the military hospital in Jerusalem, she received a letter from Erwin. He wrote:

> Dearest Carola, get me out of this hospital! I cough day and night. My body is wracked with pain. The doctors don't tell me anything about my health. I have to corner them to get their ear. The nurses are unkind, they don't want to be bothered. They tell me to go out in the garden or go play my violin. Or "--take my medicine." I am getting weaker day by day. How can I play the violin when I cough my guts out? How I miss my beloved music. How I miss you and the children. I am so lonely, so neglected. I fear for my life. I want to be in a Jewish hospital. Please come right away. I anxiously await your arrival here. Bring my good suit. I want to visit with you and the children at home for a few days. Oh, how I yearn for all of you and our beloved home.
>
> Your unhappy Erwin.

Before Carola could arrange to have Erwin released from the hospital, it was no longer possible for her to do so. One day after her arrival there, Erwin died of pnuemonia, 42 years old. He is buried in the British military cemetery on the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem. And that is the way it was for Erwin: his emigration beginning in 1933, ending with his death in 1944.

As for Milly's son Herbert, his emigration to Morocco in 1933 led him deep into a maze of adventures from one foreign land to another, finally after many years landing him in the United States. Adventures whose roots were laid before he was born when his beautiful mother--Aunt Milly--in one of her

celebrated salon soirées--had been introduced to the son of the royal family of Morocco. Their friendship developed and continued after his return to Rabat. In the years that followed, her young son Herbert was ready to embark on his own life. Seeking every possible advantage for him, Aunt Milly wrote her royal friend of her hope that he would take Herbert under his protection, favor him with opportunities to equip him for the rich life he was entitled to, to open doors for him on that life; a mother's wish that she knew the Prince would be happy to grant when His Royal Highness saw with his own eyes her handsome young son Herbert, already on his way to Rabat to see him.

But Aunt Milly never told Herbert--or the family--that she had not received an acknowledgement of her letter and its request. And so it was that no door opened, no opportunity awaited Aunt Milly's son Herbert when he arrived to see the Prince. His Royal Highness, Herbert was informed, was out of the country...unspecified period...series of urgent international conferences, affairs...

And so it was that not wanting to return to Germany and because he was fluent in English, Herbert applied and was hired by an English-speaking concern. And so too it was that whatever the reason, unspecified, not given, the Rabat authorities denied him the essential work-permit to remain there. And so young Herbert applied for a student-visa to

English-speaking, English-held Gibraltar, known throughout the world as 'The Rock", Britain's land, sea and air bastion straddling the narrowest part of the Mediterranean Sea. And for Herbert, a fabulous "Open, Sesame!" door now was opening to a new adventure in his life.

I do not know how he got to Gibraltar, but get there he did. There he studied engineering, the Jewish Agency helping him in every way to survive--without the help of his beautiful mother Aunt Milly and her royal Prince of Morocco.

In 1939 when England declared war on Germany for having invaded Poland, Herbert was interned as an enemy alien. After a few weeks in camp, he was transferred by ship to England for internment there. On the way, the ship docked in Casablanca. The Moroccan authorities boarded the ship, demanded that Herbert be released to their government, their documents confirming that right, and so Herbert was handed over to them. Once on land, he was put in solitary confinement. Totally helpless. Nobody but the British knew where he was. Would they care? After all, he was an 'enemy alien'. But why was he released to the Morocc ns? What were the charges against him? Tried to recall his activities during his six months in Morocco as to why he was being held. He had stolen nothing. Broken no law. The only thing he had done was--to exist, to dream of a new life anywhere but there.

Days went by. He kept track of them by the number of

daily meals--one each day--shoved into his cell. Was he going to rot in this dark filthy cell forever? Days--weeks--nobody knew where he was--dead--alive. He wept. Thought he would lose his reason. Not even a hope of escape. Only the sound of footsteps. But then one day a key turned in the lock on his floor, the sound of footsteps approaching, stopping, his cell door opening, light blending his eyes. Shoved out of the cell he was pushed along and forward into the prison center, there awaiting him a British representative. And so, after all, the British had not forgotten him, had worked their power to extradite him back to their superior authority. Freedom!

And yet, on arrival in England, again he was interred. Not in a dark dank cell, but on a lovely island called 'The Isle of Man'. Although technically an 'enemy alien', Herbert was eternally grateful to the British for getting him out of the helplessness of the Moroccan jail. And so, when the British offered him a way off the Isle of Man if he joined the British Army, he enlisted, happy to do so. Because he was a Jew, he was advised--in case of capture by the Germans--to change his German name to an English one, from Herbert Heppner to Herbert Bright. And shortly thereafter, put on a transport to Australia. There he served until 1941 in the Royal Corps of Electrical & Mechanical Engineering.

In 1942, again he was transferred, this time to India, Burma and Malaya to command an Indian Company. In later years,

Herbert told us stories about his service in those far-away countries in the bush and the snake-infested jungles in India where native soldiers refused to wear boots; and sunglasses not allowed: one's eyes had to become accustomed to the glare. And always, looking for enemy infiltration, there was a hassle with the undisciplined soldiers.

Seven years later, Herbert returned to England, now a legal immigrant. And in the summer of 1947, came to the United States to visit his mother, the beauteous Aunt Milly, whom he hadn't seen in fourteen years--nor his sister Ada and her family, all now living in New York. Unfortunately, soon thereafter, his mother, Aunt Milly, died of a heart attack. One year later--having returned to England--Herbert made his final emigration in 1948, to join his family in America. He'd had enough of tramping in foreign countries, the fear of entrapment in some prison there. Not even on vacation would he set foot out of his beloved America.

He and his wife Mülle--sister of Paul, my husband--whom he had married in 1963, constantly and extensively traveled only in the United States and Canada.

Mülle also had lived in England. Also had been interned on the Isle of Man (they never met there). Also had joined the British Army, thus 'liberating' herself out of the internment camp on the Isle of Man. And in 1946, also made her final move to join us--her family—here in America.

Before these events when all our family was whirled into lands not of their birth, before then--in the year that was 1933--when Hitler came to power in Germany, Erwin emigrated to Palestine, Herbert to Morocco, and my father arranged for me to learn home-economics in a school run by a Jewish women's organization. In addition to the school, they ran an old-age home, a place that in addition to caring for its inmates, also served as a mid-day dinner restaurant for about one hundred people. Moreover, this organization also ran a summer camp outside of Hamburg.

And so when I was 15 years old, in the year that was 1933, I lived in an old-age home for women, slept there nights, worked there days. Once a week we worked in the big kitchen. There we ground fish into a wash basin. Beat 60 egg-whites at a time. Cooked in enormous pots. We had a great time. In the evening I ate with the old ladies. They forever touched my cheeks, told me what lovely skin I had. Soon I learned that there was a caste system. The ladies who played cards with the Headmistress of the home had special privileges. They walked around with their heads in the air. The not-so-privileged were forever whispering, gossiping about the Headmistress and her entourage.

One day when I visited my relatives, I saw that Rolf looked distressed, wanting to tell me something, hesitating, but saying nothing. I insisted on knowing what was bothering

him. Rolf burst out: Do you know why they accepted you in that school and in that old-age home? Because Poppi told them that you were travelling around with the wrong crowd and that you were promiscuous!

I couldn't believe it.

The next day before I went to school, I spoke to the principal, asked her why they had accepted me. She hemmed and hawed, finally telling me that they were told that I was an extremely difficult girl; that they were trying only to help straighten me out. How could my father have done such a thing! I went to the Doctor. My hymen was intact. I brought a note to that effect to the head of the women's organization who told me I didn't have to bring any proof of my innocence.

I finished out the course. I wanted to become a baby nurse. I wasn't old enough. So my father paid for me to be in their summer camp in Segeberg as a learning experience. We opened up the camp, got everything ready before the children came. I cleaned 20 stone floors with a strong soap solution every day, developed an eczema on my hands that kept oozing all the time. My other chores: to wash dishes, set tables, clean up vomit. A scarlet fever epidemic broke out. I never had the disease. Just the same, they made me liaison between the main camp and our separate cottage of 11-12 year olds. I played games with them, fed them, told stories. They had a good time. I felt that I had done well. So when the epidemic

danger was over, I asked to help with the children but it was denied, One day another girl arrived. She had been confined in a mental institution. No one wanted to sleep with her. I felt sorry for her so I volunteered. Another time, Rolf came to visit me. I asked permission to leave for a few hours. The answer was no. I got so upset and hurt that I dropped a stack of dishes I was carrying. After that happened, I received permission to visit with my brother Rolf. On the 19th of August, 1934, after once again cleaning up vomit, I ran away. I hid in a doorway in town until the bus came. I went back to Hamburg to cousin Meinhart. He insisted that I visit the President of the women's organization to tell her that I was O.K. and why I had run away. Afraid and miserable, I did as I was told. Yet one thought kept troubling me: did Poppi really ever pay for my keep in Hamburg and Segeburg?

Meanwhile Meinhart called my father, who said I was to return to Magdeburg, to my grandma's house. There Poppi visited me, said that he had found employment for me as an au pair with a Jewish family in Berlin. It was now September. What could I do?

I was picked up at the station and taken to their home. A family with two children. They ownded a hat shop downstairs, lived in an apartment upstairs. Every morning before the store opened I swept the sidewalk, then went inside, arranged hats on shelves, then upstairs, get breakfast for the kids and

ready them for school. In the evenung after supper I again went downstairs into the workroom where I picked up needles and pins with a magnet. My lady had a flair for improvising and beautifying hats that she bought cheaply, sold for much more than they had originally cost her. I enjoyed watching her salesmanship. Yet as nice as the family was, I grew increasingly homesick every day of the month I was there. An insane kind of miracle cut short my misery when Hitler decreed that Jews who had moved to Berlin had to return to their home cities. And so it was that that decree got me back to Grandma's house in Magdeburg, overjoyed to be there and with her.

. . .

I was 16 years old on October 1934. I was to have a respite for one year. No school. No responsibilities. I joined the Zionist organization where I met the most interesting young Jewish people who were learning Hebrew, preparing to go to Palestine. We discussed books, sang songs. It was truly an intellectual group. I was assigned a teacher, a young boy of 17, to teach me Hebrew. No sooner did we get started when he was arrested for spitting at the Nazi banner at a parade. He sneezed he told them, but they held him until our group was able to get him a certificate for entering Palestine. In later years that would not have been possible.

Among the young people in the Zionist group, the one I enjoyed most was Jochen--Jack, two years younger than I. We bicycled together, went to the movies, listened to music, discussed books.

Jack's family had a Schrebergarden. Schrebergardens are very small plots of land, one after the other for miles and miles along the railroad tracks in Germany. A man by the name of Schreber, while riding the trains, seeing all the unused land on both sides of the track got the idea that urban dwellers could buy little plots of land for little money, and so enjoy their own vacation spot just outside the city.

Jack's parents--the Graneks--owned one of those little gardens. Many times we got on our bicycles to visit the little plot of land his parents had--but never gardened. They had no interest in planting anything. In spite of that, everything grew profusely. The first thing one saw when arriving was a black railroad car in the middle of their garden, an incongruous sight amid the lushness. His parents used the railraod car like a cottage. The walls inside had built-in wooden squares, formerly used for the sorting of mail. Now they were filled with dishes, pots and other kitchen utensils. In addition to all this paraphernalia, there was a scatter of cots, tables, chairs, things to rest on, sit on, sleep on, cook on--all dragged out onto the downtrodden grass in front of the railroad car, weather permitting. On the right side of the garden grew

the most delicious strawberries. Elsewhere the grass was very high. Overhanging the railroad car dangled the fruit of the neighbor's plum tree. We used to climb up onto the top of the car, and eat the plumps. A little further down was a pump to get water. Here beside it grew a cherry tree, abundant with its glistening fruit. This particular cherry has a name--Schatmorelle. It was neither sweet or sour. It looked like a Bing cherry. Even to this day they're served on vanilla ice-cream in fine restaurants throughout Germany. Delicious! A little further on was the outhouse. To get to it, one had to walk through the dense growth of grass which was at least four feet high, so dense that Jack and I let ourselves fall backwards just for the fun of it. We never hit the ground.

That garden was totally neglected, totally bizarre, yet the most delightful place. I would give anything to be once more on that little plot of land.

Fifty years later, visiting Germany, riding the trains, there they still were on both sides of the tracks, miles and miles of Schrebergardens.

Through all the hard days of my life I remembered that one year. At least I had had that.

. . .

My Aunt Reny had lost her husband and she now moved into

my Grandma's house. She couldn't stand to see me idle, so she persuaded my Uncle David who owned a big department store in Magdeburg to employ me as an apprentice. In Germany you couldn't work anywhere unless you first apprenticed for three years. I liked the work, working in the flannel department. I learned to measure and cut. What grade to sell for their different uses. Once in a while I was sent to the attic where the down and feathers were stored. There I weighed quantities of different sorts and filled them into separate linings to be inserted into smooth featherbed covers; various sizes according to customer-specifications. Here, in this gabled attic with its triangled sloping ceiling was a magical tent soft with light filtering through the dormered windows and onto the planked floorboards where down and feathers came to rest and--stirred up--floated down all around me in a gentle embrace of whiteness. I shivered with the love of it all.

At times I worked in the packing department. My Uncle, who had hired me despite a feud on our side of the family, hounded me, thought me stupid. So when he stood watching me, I cut myself or dropped things.

. . .

During one of the yesterdays of my growing up, things happen--by chance, by accident--that affect the course of our

lives. As it did to mine when I returned from work in the department store owned by Uncle David who was never happy with my work any more than with his son's lack of desire to follow in his footsteps. Coming home, I found the doors to the living room locked. Why this was so--when they were usually open--I do not know. Or what made me put my ear to the locked doors. But I did. And heard my father and his lawyer persuading Grandmother to change her Will in favor of my father--with very little remaining for his four sisters. The lawyer left, the door remaining open.

I looked at my father. I had heard what was going on in there. And told him so! In a rage, he struck out at me, but I ran into the bathroom, locked myself in. At that time outside the bathroom, there was a scaffold to enable workers make repairs on the building. I climbed out the window and worked myself across the scaffold to the bedroom where I locked myself in. Hours later at supper time, the maid knocked at the door. I have your supper here. Where is my father? I said. He left. I opened the door...and my father stormed in, hitting me and pulling me by the hair through the room. My ear bleeding, I escaped him, running out of the house to my Uncle David. Crying, I told him what happened. The next day my uncle sent a letter to my father. A few days later my father sent a letter to Uncle David...who washed his hands of

of our family and I was fired. Of course my aunts were told what my father--their brother--was trying to do and now they went and accused him of coercing my grandmother to change her Will in his favor--and against their interests. Because he physically threatened them, they also locked themselves into the back bedroom. But Granny did change her Will to my father's favor. Yet it never came to be--due to Hitler and the Nazi Party already grinding Germany and the lives of all Germans down into chaos.

Yet as time went by, 'things' in our immediate family--if not in the Nation--went back to normal. Poppi visited Granny often, and Aunt Reny and I were on fairly good terms with him again. It now was 1935 and Poppi once again went on a trip to the Mountains. Before that, he told us that someone had charged bakery items to his bill. He notified the police. But already in 1935 nobody who was Jewish would dare notify the police...or go dancing in public places. They were afraid to call attention to themselves. Not my father. He disregarded our warnings. A day after his departure for the Mountains, the police came looking for him. We assumed it was in connection with the bakery bill. And so we paid no attention to the matter, time enough until he returned. On the day he did, Poppi was expected for coffee.

Granny lived in an apartment with a large balcony overlooking a large plaza, the center in which was a small

park with splashing fountains. On weekends, band concerts were held there. An Operetta House on one side, a movie house on the other side of the street. Little shops were interspersed here and there. All the trolley cars coming from the main street came into the Plaza, winding their way around, tinkling their different tunes. I loved to watch all the goings-on. Now I looked forward to this afternoon's family kaffeeklatsch. Today the wicker table was set outside on the balcony. All kinds of goodies awaited us. I was impatient for Dad's arrival. Granny sat at her usual window seat: Dad was her Darling. She had always spoiled him. Aunt Reny, tall and statuesque--we called her the 'Walkure' behind her back--entered the room. We were all there, waiting. But the one for whom we all waited was not here: Sidney, my father. Whatever could be the matter? Ruth, please call your Dad. I dialed. It rang and rang. No answer. He must be on his way. We waited. Finally, after a few more calls, we had coffee without him. We were upset, tried not to show it. It wasn't like Poppi to be so thoughtless. Hours passed. Aunt Reny looked at Granny, then at me. I don't want to worry you, but we must find out what happened. She called the Hospital, then the Police, hoping to get some kind of answer. The Sergeant suggested that I go home to our apartment, where I was to meet a policeman whom he would send. I was frightened: What would I find when I got there? I had visions of Poppi dead on the floor or in a coma or bloodied by

a burglar. The closer I got to home, the worse my imaginings.

There was the policeman: Are you Miss Winterfelt?

"Yes."

Do you have the keys?

"Yes. Here they are. You try the door."

He tried and tried, couldn't open it. I couldn't imagine why.

We'll have to break in.

"Oh-my-god!" And couldn't hold back my tears.

He tried to calm me: Come, it may not be so bad. We'll borrow a ladder from the brewery around the corner. Too late to get a locksmith.

Meanwhile a crowd had gathered, watched us go up to the second floor, break a window, climb in. My ears pounded as I started to walk from room to room. Everything was in order. But no Dad.

Back at Granny's, we again got on the phone. We called all relatives, friends, business acquaintances. The station house. With no success. Finally Aunt Reny said, "The Nazis have a Horst Wessel House*. Why don't you call there?"

"Ridiculous!" I said. "What should they want with him?" But because it was the only place left to call, I called.

Horst Wessel House here. Heil Hitler.

"Good evening. Do you have a Mr. Winterfelt there?"

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* German-Nazi arrest & detention centers, named after the Storm Trooper Horst Wessel, a pimp killed in a sexual brawl in his room in the Berlin slums on February 23, 1930; raised to Nazi sainthood by Nazi propaganda chief Josef Goebbels and celebrated in the Nazi anthem Die Fahne Hoch, commonly known as the Horst Wessel song.

And finally the answer came: Yes. I was shocked. The Nazis were in power only since 1933. Not it was 1934. And already they had established arrest and detention centers all over Germany. I had not known it. Now Poppi was in their hands.

I was standing. I collapsed into the chair. "Who are you?" the voice came through the phone.

"I am Miss Winterfelt. His daughter. Why is my father there?"

"How old are you?" said the voice on the phone.

"Sixteen."

"Is there someone older?" said the voice.

"My aunt. His sister."

"Let me speak to her," the voice said. I handed the phone to Aunt Reny, hanging on every word. They had picked him up in the morning. They objected to him--a Jew--having an Aryan girl-friend. They gave my aunt and me permission to visit the next morning. Nobody slept that night.

When we arrived at the Horst Wessel House, it swarmed with Nazis. Brown uniforms. Black uniforms. With all kinds of insignia pounding into my eyes: swastikas and heads of eagles and bolts of lightning. I felt as if I were walking into the devil's den, my voice small in it: "Good morning."

"Heil Hitler."

"We came to see Mr. Winterfelt."

"Come with me." And walked us down a narrow hall. "Sit there!" And walked off.

After a few minutes we saw a man coming toward us. Disheveled. Unshaven. Poppi! I ran towards him. We embraced. He was crying. Crying all the time we were there. I was scared.

He told us how they had come to the door, ordered him to get dressed, take nothing with him, marched him off, put him in a cell, an iron cot with no bedding, and hardly anything to eat. The worst was in not knowing if his family knew what was happening to him. Or what these Nazis were going to do to him, especially since he was stateless, worse than being a German Jew. All because Granny, who had returned to Germany from the United States with all her very young children, had let her American citizenship lapse.

We were told we had to leave, our time was up, could visit the day after tomorrow. We kissed Dad goodbye. He clung to us. We all cried. Aunt Reny and I held on to each other all the way home.

When we got there, other relatives had arrived. Held a family meeting, wondering how we could get the Nazis to release Dad. Uncle David knew the Spanish consul, said he would talk to him, seek his help. And also summoned our lawyer.

Three endless weeks passed. During this time, when we were allowed we visited Poppi. One day--when we got there--he was not there.

Gone.

They had taken him out of the Horst Wessel House, and put him in Magdeburg Prison!

No more visits.

And only one letter, once a week. From us to him. Never knew if he received any one of them for we never heard from him.

Five months later, a stranger rang our bell. He told us that he had been in prison with Poppi. That Poppi was well and sent his love. Over a cup of coffee, he told us about prison life. And then his own story.

He was a Protestant--who never joined the Nazi party. He had a supervisory job in a big factory. His assistant, a Party member who wanted his position, denounced him as a communist. And so he was picked up, the same as Dad; was in prison all these months, but finally cleared of all charges and released. His job and his reputation gone, he was despondent and crushed.

Meanwhile, our lawyer wrote many letters to the authorities. And the Spanish consul repeatedly told the Nazi officials that Dad was under his Government's protection, but to no avail.

Nine months later, Poppi was taken to the Eschwege Concentration Camp, the authorities not informing us. There was no way to communicate with him. We were helpless. Nothing we could do. Only continue writing letters to the camp authorities. Sent the Spanish consul to Eschwege. With no

luck. Could only tell us what he saw: barbed wire and a big moat surrounding the camp, and what he heard: rumors of a few inmates disappearing in it, without a trace.

The atmosphere in Granny's house, where I had been living since that fateful day, became ever more despairing.

But then it was, there it was, nine months very much later, that we received a letter from the Camp Commandant informing us that Dad would be released and to send money for his return trip home.

What a beautiful day that was! It seemed as if we would live a fairly normal life again. Wasting no time, we sent the money for Dad's trip back to his family. And waited for Dad. But no Dad. Again we waited. Again we wrote. Then--finally--got an answer: instead of sending Dad off to Magdeburg, they had taken him and a few others by train to the Czechoslovakian border...and dumped him there.

A new waiting period began, a series of them, one worse than the other. Was he alive? Had he been caught? Where was he? A month later, we received a letter from Prague, with a familiar beloved handwriting--Poppi's. He was alive! In it he wrote how the Nazis had smuggled them across the border, threatened them--if they valued their lives--never to return.

During the two years since Poppi's release from concentration camp, the Hebrew Agency secured food and lodging for him in Prague. And so, plus our ten marks each a month

permitted by the Nazi government to be sent out of Germany, Dad managed to exist: he in Prague. And I desposited with different relatives in different cities in Germany.

Worrying about Poppi was made worse when on one of my returns back to Magdeburg--in 1935, I was ordered to appear in the pre-dawn hour of 4:30 a.m. at the Horst Wessel House. This was the very same place where my father had been interned ...and then jailed in Magdeburg Prison...and then transported on to the Eschwege Concentration Camp. Magdeburg, the city where I was born, one of the worst cities in Nazi Germany in its virulence against Jews, sought to get rid of every single Jew who lived there. Was it my turn now, as it had been my father's? I was not yet seventeen years old--and frightened to death. There was no escape. I had to go...

I shivered with fear as I was hurried through the Horst Wessel House a nd its beehive of activity and clattering typewriters and into a back room where a cold voice--hard as the rigid-extended-arm--sliced through the yellow light: "Heil Hitler! What are you doing here in Magdeburg?!

"I live here. I was born here."

"Don't argue with me! You don't belong here! We know you lived in Hamburg and Berlin! Why did you come back?"

"My grandmother lives here. I live with her."

"If you stay, you'll be sorry! Get out of my City, that's my advice. Get back to Berlin. We don't want you here. Now get out!"

He could tell me to get out because by that time the decree that all Jews not born in Berlin had to return to their birth cities had been rescinded.

I was glad to get out. Free! I went back to Grandma's house. On the way, I bought a Berlin newspaper. There were many ads. I answered one, a job in a bedding store. They hired me. But because I was a Jew and stateless, the job was not open for me. I could only work as a domestic. Through another ad, a Mrs. Krebs interviewed me as an au pair. Like myself a Jew, Mrs. Krebs--as with all Jews--was not allowed to have a Gentile work for them. She hired me. I returned to Magdeburg to gather my things. And so, packing those few belongings together, left my birthplace for the third time, a suitcase in each hand. Clothes in one bag. And in the other, books: they were my friends and family; I would not leave without them.

On my arrival in Berlin, no one came to pick me up. My suitcases were heavy. I had to stop and rest many times. It was evening, the city ablaze with lights--Berlin! I felt so lost in it.

My employers were very nice. But when I met some distant relatives, I then was persuaded to come live with them, help with the housework. They, the Schleins, were a wonderful family. There was Uncle Heinrich and Tante Mikka, daughter Ruth, husband George, Baby Gunther and Nurse, plus three sons:

Hans, Kurt, Gerhardt and nephew Heinz. I was the new addition.

All of them treated me like family. I had a lot of fun with the boys. But the work was hard, and the house was filled with it and all the things to make it run.

There were sacks of flour, sugar and all kinds of beans. The stove was old-fashioned, made of iron. My first job in the morning was to light it, no simple thing. It took time and patience: first paper, then twigs to get it going, and finally adding the coal. The twigs and firewood we got from a man who came once a week, his plodding horse pulling the heavily loaded wagon. When they stopped in front of our house, I would go down with the potato peels which we saved all week. I handed him the peels. Somewhere he had a stable with cows. The cows got the peels. We got the wood. No money changed hands.

Every day Tante Mikka was cooking and baking for ten people. She was a great cook. Every day aromas kept wafting through the kitchen, pots and pans simmering, boiling, baking in and on the hot stove ablaze with the coal that we kept feeding its hungry fires. She saw to it that orange peels were never wasted, They went into a container of pure alcohol that weeks later became an orange liqueur. And that mushrooms were strung on a long cord high over the stove, the heat drying them, drawing out tiny worms that dropped down, sizzling on the hot iron surface.

The house was full of work. Every day I went down to the street where the waiting milkman dippered milk out of one of his wagon's large vats into the first one of my three containers I held; then heavy cream into the second container; and 'quark' --a kind of sour cottage cheese--into the third. Every Monday we boiled the laundry in large vats steaming on the coal-burning stove. Then I washed the linens in the bathtub--on my knees all day long--scrubbing with a large hard-bristled brush...and lifting it all out of the tub, carrying them back to boil for a second time. After rinsing, wringing out and hanging the wash, I carried the heavy load of what now was the damp and drying laundry to a special store where their employees fed the linens into enormous electrically-heated mangels, saving us the labor of hand-ironing each separate piece. Washed, boiled, rinsed, hung, mangled and, finally, folded and piled in my arms, I carried it all back to the apartment and stacked them into the linen closet.

Monday was the one day of the week I hated most, no laughing matter. And although everybody made their own beds, I still had to take care of all the rooms: sweeping, cleaning, tidying up; except for one special room: the 'business' room. Larger than all the other rooms in the spacious Schlein apartment, it was the room where Ruth a nd George manufactured skirts.

For me the worst time of the year was when I--with Tante

Mikka's help--cleaned the parquet floors throughout the large apartment, cleaned them slat by slat with steel wool and turpentine. I envied the baby nurse: she had only to take care of the baby.

On Friday nights, the Schleins' three other daughters arrived with their husbands and children, making twenty people for dinner. All the women helped with the dishes. On the other days of the week, dinner was at 1:30 pm, the men coming home from the store. All stores closed from 1-to-3 pm. After dinner, the men napped or read the papers, then went back to work.

And so, what with breakfast at 7, second breakfast at 10:30, dinner at 1:30 pm, coffee-and-cake mid-afternoon, supper at 7:30 pm and, one hour later, various fruits and drinks, the household was run on this well-regulated schedule. What with setting the table, clearing the table, removing the dishes, washing the dishes, there was no end of work to do. Despite the hard work, but because I was regarded an essential part of the household, I loved their home and the family. And because of that, whenever I wanted time off, I didn't have to ask, aware only that it must not interfere with my work in the Schlein household; always receiving pocket money and gifts of apparel suitable for the season.

Winter came. The lake finally was frozen over. "Tante Mikka," I told her. "I'm going skating, I'll be home soon." And

left the house with Tanta Mikka's wishes that I enjoy myself.

As I waited for the trolley, I wondered if my skates would stay on my shoes. They always gave me a lot of trouble. Hardly anyone had one-piece combination shoe-skates in those days. My skates were clamped onto the soles of my shoes, tightened with a skate-key, and tied around the ankles with leather thongs to keep the skates from loosening and falling off. But somehow one or the other always loosened, The trolley came. I got on the back platform and stayed there. The ride took only ten minutes. An older man with his granddaughter got off when I did.

"Going skating?" he said.

"Yes."

"We are too. It's a lovely day, isn't it?"

"Yes."

"Do you like to skate?"

"Yes, but I don't do too well."

"Helga here doesn't either, so stay with me and I'll teach you both."

I was rather short with the old man at first because I was Jewish and in those days 'Aryans' didn't mix with Jews. But then I decided that it wouldn't do any harm to talk to him and his granddaughter. After all it was only for a little while, and talk would be limited on how to skate.

We walked together through the lovely park with its

majestic old trees and winding paths. Families strolling or sitting on benches absorbing the sun. A brass band nearby playing its usual Sunday afternoon concert.

Approaching the lake, boys and girls were putting on their skates, others coming off the ice for refreshments. On the ice the skaters colorful in their varying costumes. Girls pirouetting, boys doing figure-eights, couples dancing on the ice, some falling and picking themselves up, only to fall again. Laughter, chasing, giving a helping hand, giggling; talking and music always in the background.

We sat down on a park bench, put our skates on and got on the ice. I felt stiff. I could hardly keep my balance. 'Grandpa' skated over to me. "I'll show you and Helga together. Give me your hands."

Helga struggled to stand, I toppled. He picked me up. Just as I got to my feet, two boys were skating by. Grandpa yelled, pointing to me. "Boys, how about giving this nice girl a ride around the lake, she doesn't skate too well."

"No, no. I don't want to. I want to stay here."

It was too late. The boys had each taken me by one hand and started skating around and around. All I had to do was to keep my feet straight and together. It was really fun, but I couldn't enjoy it.

What had I gotten myself into? If only I could skate well, I could have excused myself and taken off. Since the

boys knew that I was sort of helpless, the more they laughed and carried on. Instead of being rebuffed by me, I became a challenge to one of them. He signalled his friend, who promptly excused himself and skated off.

Putting his arm around me, only to steady me of course, he said, "My name is Kurt."

"I'm Ruth."

"I'll teach you how to skate."

What am I going to do? If only my skate would loosen!

"Take the right foot, slide-lift-balance."

And then I saw his ring flash in the sunlight: two flashes of lightning on a black background. Oh God! That is some kind of Nazi insignia. "Now the left foot, slide-lift-balance."

One flash meant one thing, two something else. If only I could remember.

"Again right foot: slide-lift-balance."

It's either the Hitler Youth or the S.S. emblem. If it's got to be one or the other, please let it be the first.

"And left, slide-lift-balance. See it's not so hard."

"Why don't you have some fun with a good skater?" I said. "Look at the girl in the green costume over there. She is quite good. And she's alone."

"But we're together! And I'm having a good time with you. So relax, enjoy yourself. Do you go to school here?"

"No, I'm visiting relatives." If only I could

remember which insignia meant what. I'm so afraid. "Oh, then you don't live in Berlin? Isn't it a beautiful city?"

"Yes, it is. My ankles hurt, I must sit down." He helped me over to a bench.

"Thank you so much. Now I'd really like to be by myself."

"I wouldn't think of leaving you, I want to see a lot of you. Don't you like me?"

"I think you are very nice, but I have a boy friend already."

Maybe that is going to do it, even though untrue. But no, he proceeded to tell me all about himself. I couldn't hold back, I had to know what the insignia meant.

"Your ring is beautiful. What does it signify?"

"S.S." Proudly.

My legs started shaking. I couldn't sit another minute. "Let's go back on the ice -- oh, my skate is loose."

"I'll tighten it for you. Give me your key."

He knelt in front of me, adjusting it. Frantically I tried to plan a course of action.

"The music is nice," he said. "Shall we skate to it?"

"I'll try." But trying only to find a way out of my situation. If I tell him I'm Jewish, he can do anything to me: make me go to bed with him, make me become his mistress. If I don't tell him anything, he'll insist on walking me home.

Then he'll know my name and it's still the same. If I insult him in any way by word or action, his ego won't let him think that he himself is the cause and he'll become suspicious. After all, who can resist a handsome fellow and the prestige of being the girl-friemd of an S.S. man? If I tell him, and appeal to him as a gentleman? He seems very nice, but if he isn't a gentleman, can I say no? He can send me to a concentration camp, send my relatives to a concentration camp. My Dad, who was a widower, was sent to a concentration camp just for having an Aryan girlfriend. No trial, no lawyer. They just picked him up one mornimg. But what am I going to do? What if I tell him a Jewish girl can harm his career?

I have to chance it, try once more to get rid of him.

"Kurt, I really had a lovely time, but I must go now. Please, let me go alone. It's not that I don't like you, but I'm practically engaged and my boyfriend would be furious."

"All right"--a little dejected, but not yet giving up. "If you won't date me, I insist on one thing--taking you home."

I'll have to tell him. So far he doesn't know anything except that my name is Ruth. If I can get away now, then I'll be safe. Dear God, please help me. I am so frightened and not only for myself. But how to get away, what to say, what to do, I don't want to give myself to him, either. Please,

oh please, I hope he is a gentleman.

Again we skated to a bench. I started to take my skates off. He helped me.

"Kurt, I have to tell you something."

"Yes?"

"I am Jewish."

"So that's why you've been acting so strangely."

"You know Jews a nd Aryans aren't allowed to mix."

"I'm an S.S. man. I can do anything I want."

"But a Jewish girlfriend would hurt your career."

"We can have Jewish friends if we want to -- and I like you very much."

"Kurt, I can't go out with an S.S. man. My family would be frightened all the time, can't you see that?"

"I can protect all of you against whatever may come."

"Kurt--please--please let me go. Isn't it enough that I don't want to? Another time perhaps I might have. I really like you. I think you're a gentleman, I know you are, but I would be frightened all the time. I'm frightened now, terribly frightened, but I'm glad that it was you and not some other fellow. I know that you will let me go. Yes?"

"...Yes..."

Thank you, thank you."

I took his hand, smiled at him and said goodbye. He let me go.

Looking back, I waved. When I was sure that he couldn't see me anymore, I began to run. I ran and ran until I was out of the park. A taxi! Thank God! I hailed it. "Kopenickstrasse 78, please!" I collapsed into the back of the car. And never returned to that lake again.

. . .

1935, New Year's Eve. It was then, during the hours into the new year of 1936, I met Paul: the man destined to be my husband and father of my two children.

The youngest and eldest of Tante Mikka's three sons, Hans and Gerhart, had escorted me to a formal dress ball given by their soccer club on this wonderful night. It was then--and there--wearing my very first evening gown and dancing into the New Year that I met the star players of the soccer team, its handsome goalie, Paul. And so it was. We started dating. I went to all the games of the Berlin Sports Club, mainly to see its outstanding soccer player--Paul Redlich--perform. Whether the hard leather globe that was the soccer ball came driving high, low or to either side of him, cannonading to zoom past his defense so as to score into the net, Paul blocked every attempt, leaping, diving, aiming his head at it or flinging his arms outspread to trap the ball against his chest and in one fluid continuing motion hurling the hard leather ball far down the field into the best spot for his teammates to drive it

towards the opposition's goalposts, the stands rising to acclaim him, my bench-neighbors hugging me, screaming what a terrific world-beater of a goalie Paul was.

In spite of the ever-worsening new debasing laws and regulations, life became sweet for me. Paul's club had to change its name to Jewish Sports Club. Jewish artists no longer were allowed to perform or exhibit their work in public places. That's when they founded "The Jewish Culture Club" which at that time was still permitted. They rented an old theatre where they put on plays, operas and concerts, sung and played by famous singers and musicians, a fantastic explosion of Germany's creative talent: Kurt Weill, Bertholt Brecht, Gunther Grass. Painters and sculptors exhibited their work. We attended many of these performances and exhibitions, but always worrying, thinking what an ideal place this old theatre was for the Nazis to break in and in one fell swoop seize the entire audience and performers, jail the bunch...and who knows where they'd end up.

Despite these fears, all performances were well attended. Occasionally, because Jews did not as yet have to identify themselves as Jews by pinning or sewing the Yellow Star on their clothing thus helping the Nazis mark and further isolate them from their fellow citizens, Paul and I openly attended the State Opera House, enjoying their performances.

Paul was an apprentice fashion designer, a talented

commercial artist with a real future awaiting him in Berlin. But seeing the heavy shadows that already were darkening that future and that of the entire nation, Paul wanted to flee Germany for the United States where he had relatives who had promised to provide him an affidavit. This was a voucher with proper bank and employment records, furnished by a U.S. citizen, relative or friend, certifying their willingness and ability to provide proper care for the petitioner for a 5-year period should he become dependent on the U.S. government during any part of those years.

When I told Paul that my father was born in the United States, in New York, he urged me to go to the U.S.Consulate to find out that if that were true, could I therefore be allowed to enter the United States.

In spite of all the terrible things now happening to the Jewish people, the thought of leaving Germany, moving to a strange country, not speaking English, forever moving from here to there, filled me with a despair that kept me from going to the Consulate for months. Finally, because of Paul's strong urging, I went.

I was escorted into a room in which a Mrs. Schneider worked. She was seated behind a flat-topped desk that held a hidden typewriter designed to come up into view when needed and down out of view when not in use.

She greeted me pleasantly, invited me to sit down.

Now, comfortable in the soft leather chair, the beautifully appointed room, the sympathetic manner of Mrs. Schneider, all caused me to lose any nervousness I may have had. So when she pleasantly asked me the purpose of my visit, the facts--as she started typing away--came pouring out, that: my father's name was Charles Sidney Winterfelt...that he was born in New York City...that he lived there until he was 11-years of age when my grandparents decided to move back to Germany...that he was listed on their passport...that after 5 years had passed they believed they had lost their American citizenship and become stateless -- as my father thought, never becoming German. Had he become a German citizen, we would never have been able to reclaim our American citizenship. It saved our life...the lives of so many of my relatives.

Mrs. Schneider kept asking question after question. Every once in a while I interrupted her to ask what my chances were to go to America. "Wait," she said. "Wait." Then continued with ever more questions, until--finally-- she said calmly the words I will never forget:

"You have been a citizen of the United States since birth," she said. "Your father never lost his American citizenship. And you--by derivative--<u>you are an American citizen</u>. We will issue you an American passport, as a citizen of the United States. You'll have to swear allegiance to the Flag of the United States--your country as well as mine." And

without a moment more, took me to the Consul. I told him that I had learned some English in school, but couldn't speak it. He smiled, said "Repeat after me: 'I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States and the country for which it stands...' And so, slowly repeating his words, pledged my allegiance to the United States '...with liberty and justice for all.' "

Mrs. Schneider shook my hand, congratulated me. I would be informed when my American passport would be ready.

Here I was. I had gone to the U.S.Consulate to find out what my chances were to enter the U.S.A. And--now!--was leaving the Consulate an American citizen!

Who could believe it!

I went home and told my relatives what had happened.

I called my future husband.

What an uproar, what excitement!

And immediately sat down to write the miraculous news to my father. And to my brother Rolf in Copenhagen--who had been learning farming in preparation to emigrate to Palestine, told him that he, too, by derivative was, like myself, an American citizen; that he go immediately to the U.S.Consulate in Copenhagen and claim his American birthright.

In the midst of all this excitement, the mail came with a letter from my father in Prague. Our letters had crossed! He wrote that he already had gone to the U.S. Embassy there, identified himself as Charles Winterfelt, born on the third of March, 1889 in New York City, the United States of America. But

having no papers to prove date and place of birth, he was picked up by the Nazis in the middle of the night, jailed, then sent to a concentration camp, and subsequently dumped across the border into Czechoslovakia. Told by the American Consul that if his name were to be found in the New York Register, he would forthwith be issued an American passport. And that's how it was! His name found in the New York Register, he received the magic little book that was an American passport. And with the help of the Jewish Agency in Prague sailed to America where with the continuing help of the Jewish Agency in New York, was placed on the welfare rolls of the City.

The irony! No one ever thought of going to the U.S. Embassy! It even took Dad three years to think of it. Had we done so, he would have been released the very next day after his confinement in the Horst Wessel House...and the heartache, the anguish and the suffering prevented.

And in Copenhagen, another American passport for another member of my family--my brother Rolf! But instead of his going on to Palestine, the Zionist Agency decided it more important for him to periodically return to Germany and help Jews escape out of the prisons that Hitler's Germany had become.

It now was time for my American passport to perform its magic by opening the door to my freedom! I had wanted to wait until Paul could go. But since none of his papers were in order, it was vital that I leave without him, get affidavits for him

in America. And no time to waste. I said my goodbyes to the Schleins, their warm house, their love--never to forget them. Years later, I heard that they had emigrated to Argentina. And without money, managed to make a living there, the men selling the cakes, cookies and liqueurs that Tante Mikka made with the help of her daughters. Later, they went back into business for themselves, manufacturing skirts and blouses, all doing well.

And so it was that I returned to Magdeburg where I went to the Tax Bureau. One could not leave Germany without a receipt from the Bureau that everything was in order. And there I was again! But this time braver than the first time--the American Passport in my pocket, no longer fearful of all the Brownshirts there: heels clicking, black boots gleaming, voices hushed-sharp-imperious-subservient. Finally I got through the brown-shirted kaleidoscope, to arrive at a brownshirt that came into focus--a man about 60-years old, seated behind a desk, his arm shooting up to greet me with "Heil Hitler!" After asking me a few questions, silently went to the door, closed it softly, came back to the desk and, leaning down over the desk, bent his head near to mine, said "Where are you going--New York?" Then--quietly: "I was in Chicago." Then--whispering: "I envy you." Now, his head bent closer, his voice the merest tissue of sound: "I wear this uniform--belong to the Party--no job without it...."

When I left the building, my eyes were no longer filled with Brownshirts....only with a vision of the blessed freedom awaiting me in America.

I borrowed some money from my best friends Mama and Papa Granek--Jochem's parents--to buy some new clothes. They said that I never had to repay them, unless and until any one of them got out of Germany. Only then and when I received word, I could return the sixty dollars they had given me.

On 6 August 1938, I returned to Berlin, my ship for America leaving August 11. In those five short days remaining, I had to get all my papers and documents validated in order to leave. As well as the affidavit Paul had received from a responsible financial American cousin vital to his getting out of Nazi Germany. Much to do, little time to do it.

On August 7, Paul a nd I went to the U.S.Consulate. Hundreds of Jews--men, women, children--milling around outside. And inside, crowding the desks, pleading for appointments which now were given only for months ahead. As an American, I got immediate access to the Consul, introduced my fiancé, asked if his affidavit was in order. The affidavit was <u>not</u> in order. Although all questions in it were answered, nothing was backed up by tax receipts, nor by proper indications of support!

The Consul advised us to get married before my departure. Then Paul would be able to enter the United States on a preference quota in three months.

But first we had to get married before my departure. And before that, get a license to get married. And before that, banns -- a public announcement of a proposed marriage -- had to be posted for at least ten days prior to a marriage! My ship was sailing in only a matter of days. How to get a license? And where?

Berlin had several city offices in outlying districts which would issue marriage licenses. Before we tried any of them, we called the shipping offices to find out if my ship's captain could marry us: Yes--but only on the high seas! We called the Rabbi of our synagogue: Yes--but only after the civil marriage! We called the American Embassy: No!--they never married anybody! Frantically going from office to office, we finally found a young and sympathetic official.

He said he could help, but only with my help. In order to cut through the time-consuming channels necessary to have my papers validated for marriage, I myself--acting as my own courier--would have to bring my papers in and out of the many offices necessary to receive full validation. And so very early the next day--running to and from subways--I sped my precious manila envelope to the different offices in the different courthouses situated in the different and far-flung areas of Berlin.

Each office opened my manila envelope, checked my papers, added additional information and confirmation, then resealed

the envelope with its own official seal. This process, agency by agency, in courthouse after courthouse, with hour-long waits and delays in between, went on all day, August 8.

The next day, August 9, only two days left before sailing for America, off I went once again with my manila envelope. And late in the day, at three o'clock in the afternoon, I hit a snag in a courthouse. None of the Judges were to be found: One was playing golf; One was on vacation. Finally, a young lawyer was found, willing to give his Okay. With only five minutes before closing time, I arrived at the last office. The official opened my envelope, looked through its papers, said abruptly "Come back tomorrow--I'll keep this manila envelope here 'til then."

"Tomorrow!" I cried out, feeling absolutely helpless in front of this Nazi and his display of power. Tomorrow it was vital that I be at the City Hall in Berlin, with all the documents my manila envelope contained--and with my American passport, "Give it back to me! It's mine!"

"No," he said. "It belongs here, with all the papers in this manila envelope!"

There was only one thing left for me to do, threaten him: "If you don't give me back my American passport, I will call the United States Embassy!"

I got my American passport--and my manila envelope.

Very early the next day, August 10, exactly one day before

my ship sailed--with or without me--for America, I was up before dawn, hurriedly washed and dressed and, clutching my precious envelope tight in my hand, got to the City Hall, arriving there at 7 a.m., ran up the stairs to a balcony circled with doors that were closed on the offices behind them--including the one I needed to get my marriage license. And there, just outside that office I sat on a wooden bench. And waited. Finally, a man passed by, glanced at me impassively, entered his office--the office containing what I sought: official approval to a marriage license for Paul and me.

After an eternity of waiting that lasted only a few minutes, I was told to go in where this brown-shirted official--as impassive facing me in his office as he'd been outside on the balcony passing in front of me--listened to me as I pointed to my manila envelope. Then held up his hand, palm facing me, coldly stopping my words with his words that, despite the papers I had, he could do **nothing for me, that I leave.**

I left. Sat on the wooden bench outside his office for a few moments, then returned for the second time, stating that since all my papers were officially in order and certified, I receive a license to marry my fiancé. Again he said "No!" Again I left, returned to his office for the third, fourth and fifth times to his increasing displeasure, sharpness and tight-lipped anger spilling out with each succeding "No!" On the sixth time, he asked how much money Paul was paying me to

marry 'our American citizen'? I told him that Paul and I had been together two-and-a-half years. Determined not to surrender my right for a marriage license, sick at heart that it was being denied by a person--a thing!--whose power existed not in himself but only in the tightly strapped-and-belted uniform that enwrapped his body, words came spilling out of me, furious, defiant, demanding "--why are you making this so difficult? You want to get rid of the Jews, don't you?"

He was silent, then laughed. "Alright, I'll give you permission to marry your Paul. Have you got 26 marks for the marriage license? Then pay for it at the Cashier's window outside!"

It didn't take me long to get to the Cashier's window, pay the twenty-six marks. And license in hand, waving it victoriously over my head, ran down the stairway, shouting "Married! Paul--we're getting married!" For there in the well of the lobby of Berlin's City Hall, already waiting in case permission was granted Ruth Winterfelt and Paul Redlich to get married, there stood Paul's father and Paul's best friend--and Paul himself, piling a dozen roses into my arms as his arms embraced me.

And so, then it was--jubilant with license and roses!--the four of us rushed across the lobby to enter a room where hanging on the wall an enormous painting of Adolf Hitler stared down on all who had business there and on the S.A. official--

arm chopping up-and-down in a non-nonsense Heil Hitler greeting --wasted no time to marry Paul and me with the words "Dearly Beloved, we are gathered here...", mumbling on and on in the briefest possible time, the speeding ceremony causing me to break into sharp laughter of relief. For three days I had been grappling with Nazi obstacles, treated like dirt, ridiculed and Heil Hitler'd to prevent a very simple marriage. And now under the huge portrait of Adolf Hitler, an officiating Nazi was uniting Paul and Ruth as if appointed by God and the approval of the Fuhrer himself!

It was done!

It was over!

At last we were Man-and-Wife: Mr. and Mrs. Paul Redlich!

And now only hours left, hours only remaining to the rest of the afternoon, the evening and overnight to get to my ship by departure time late the next morning. Hours left and much to do. We sent my father-in-law home to tell my mother-in-law to have dinner ready, sent my husband's friend to get a ticket for a later train to Hamburg--we had missed an earlier one--while Paul and I went to the American Consulate to officially change my name from Winterfelt to Redlich. Then home to Dinner, Congratulations, Good-byes...Paul and I speeding by taxi to make the train for Hamburg in time, Paul close beside me, his wedding roses clutched in my arms. And the great iron beast of a locomotive, bell clanging, whistle blowing, its snaking train

of cars moving through clouds of steam billowing past--rushed on to Hamburg where hours later we spent the night at the apartment of my cousins Ada and Meinhart Dobriner and their two young boys Werner and Ralph. Then waking early the next morning--washed-dressed-breakfasted--again good-byes, good-lucks, congratulations, speeding by taxi to the railroad station, bought our tickets for the two-hour train-ride to the harbor of Cuxhaven where my ship, the trans-Atlantic liner "New York", flagship of the Hapag-American line of Germany, destination New York!--the United States of America!--lay berthed, waiting for me! And I was there--August 11, 1938--on time!by grace of derivative-citizenship and, purchased by the goodwill, love and blessing of my family, my ticket to freedom....but freedom without my husband.

In a matter of minutes--three signal blasts of the ship's siren and the cry 'All ashore that's going ashore'--there was one thing still to mark that I was a married woman, married only yesterday. And so, making Ruth Paul's woman and wife, it was done: Paul moved the golden wedding ring--strictly forbidden by Nazi edict to contain more than 33% of the precious metal, the rest an inferior alloy--from my engagement finger, fourth finger of my left hand, to my wedding finger, fourth finger of my right hand. Thus was this circlet of metal transmuted--by German tradition--from engagement ring into wedding ring, a woman's hands revealing whether she is engaged,

married or--wearing both her own and husband's wedding rings on her right hand--widowed. Having observed the German custom, we now observed the American custom: wedding ring on the fourth finger of the left hand. And so with a kiss, it was done.

And now--the siren hoarsely drowning the cries of 'All ashore!!", final warning to all visitors, I realized that my husband soon would no longer be with me, was leaving me, already beginning to descend the gangplank, when suddenly--abruptly--stopping--turning, struggling up through the descending flow of visitors and back to me, Paul and I falling into each other's arms, clinging to each other for dear life itself. Holding him to protect him against the constant danger of being picked up one night by the Nazis, and I--alone in a strange country--unable to help him in his country.

How could I leave him?

How could we leave each other?

But a ship's officer--carrying out his duties--not unkindly decided it for both of us.

Now, alone, I was standing on the top deck, pressing hard against the rail, my fellow passengers already having gone below deck to their various staterooms. I kept looking down at the pier. There he stood -- Paul. He looked so small. Would he be able to come to America within the 3-month preference-quota? Would I be able to procure a valid affidavit for him? I cried and cried as the liner left the shore.

. . .

Now here I was--from my beginning, a beginning that many years ago began with my great-grandparents in Jutroshin...then in Magdeburg...then in Berlin...then in Hamburg and then in the magical sailing interlude from Cuxhaven across the Atlantic Ocean to America...and once more again always beginning...ten days after my arrival in the United States on August 29, 1938, here in New Rochelle...working for Mrs. K.

Mrs. K wouldn't hire me unless I could cook. I lied that I could.

Mrs. K was about 32 years old. She was very attractive in an eccentric sort of way. Her hair was jet black. She wore it in the style of a geisha. She used white powder on her face, pink jelly on her lips, her blue eyes in sharp contrast. She had a flair for what she wore, looked stunning in spite of her extremely wide hips. She was small bosomed, small waisted, her stomach flat. She didn't like underwear. She never wore any. The cleaner came every day picking up and bringing back the freshly cleaned clothes. If she didn't go out, she wore a smock too short to cover everything. Once she and Mr. K went to a party, she in a black jersey evening gown, nothing underneath it. Whenever they went out, I took care of their 10½-year old son Bobby who became my buddy.

The time had come for me to prepare my first evening meal

for the family. I was tense. Would I be able to manage? Since I did not know how to cook, my job--along with the doing of so many other household chores--depended in my knowing how to cook. I had to find a way to hold on to my job. But how? I told Mrs. K that she might not like the heavy German cooking and the different entrees I was used to. And so she explained American cookery to me. I discovered I had an aptitude for cooking and--remembering some of Tante Mikka's recipes, especially the bread pudding which the K-family loved--I got away with it, held onto my job.

I had had English as a second language in school in Germany; improving it a day-to-day experience in New Rochelle. Early each morning the sons of the local deli-owner delivered the food that had been ordered. We struck up a happy relationship, talking sometimes for hours, possible only because Mrs. K never came down before 10 in the morning. And so, slowly my English improved, thanks to the patient, good-natured deli boys--my teachers by day. At night, there would be the local newspapers--with a dictionary in hand. The funnies were easy. I loved them, learned a lot from them. Within one month I spoke English well, and with time improved my vocabulary.

'Happy' was our mailman. The name suited him. He was always cheerful. I told him about Paul and that I was waiting for mail from him. Every day when I knew that 'Happy' was due to deliver the mail, I stood by the living-room window, waiting

to see him coming in the distance. One of his fingers up: one letter from Paul. Two fingers up: two letters. In Paul's first letter he wrote of the trouble he had had. Returning to Berlin after seeing me off at Cuxhaven, he was ordered to appear at the City Hall, charged with having left Berlin without filling out a proper form that informed the authorities with the name of the city and the address you were leaving and the one you were going to. And immediately on arrival there, the process was reversed: first the new address, then the old one. A process known as Abmelden and Anmelden, in use then and probably to this day, thus keeping track of every citizen.

I had come to Berlin from Magdeburg without these formalities because I was leaving after five days for New York. Five days! They were amazed. They didn't understand what to them was a breach of legal formalities. And told Paul that there was no record of my being registered in Berlin--where I had to have been during the ten days for marriage banns to be publicly posted and, so, legally be permissable for a marriage to take place. When Paul told them that special dispensation had been granted for our marriage, thus allowing me to leave the country after five days, they let him go. But they could have held him there, on any one of a number of pretexts. Being called to appear at any government office was a cause for great worry. Though they let Paul go--for the moment, now they were aware of his very existence. And soon proved it: by his being

taken from his job as Assistant Fashion Designer creating ladies' suits and coats, and immediately dumping him into one of the many Nazi slave-labor camps. Which one? Where? And end up working with acids--unprotected without safeguards against its deadly fumes--in a chemical factory.

One finger, two fingers, no fingers, whatever, Paul--one of the uncounted thousands of slave workers-- was imprisoned in Nazi Germany. And I was free in the United States, in New Rochelle, New York, working in the home of Mrs. K. There was no counting the days that still separated Paul and me. And no time to waste in dreaming. Only the daily work that had to be done was of any help. My days off were Thursday and every second Sunday. Because it was summertime, every Thursday I went to the beach. But the young people there were not interested in me, because I was married. So most of the time I went to the movies, getting to see a double-feature at Proctor's and--cramming it all in on the same day--another double-feature at Loew's. I loved the movies. Not only did they bridge the time between Paul and me, they helped improve my English. And on Sundays I visited Elli and Marshall. But apart from desperately missing Paul, what I needed now, here in America, was a friend, someone--a girl my own age--to share thoughts, dreams, secrets.

The deli-boys--Frank and Harry--introduced me to their friend, Jeanette, We hit it off from the start. Life became

more bearable after Jeanette. But still not enough. Two months having passed with no news from the authorities about Paul, Marshall called our congressional representatives who promised to look into the matter. And so they did...with no success. With only one month to go when the preferential quota was to free him to come to the United States--to me, his American wife--where was he?--what could have happened to him? --would I ever see him again?--or was it all not meant to be?

On October 6, 1938, the day of my twentieth birthday, the doorbell rang. I opened the door. Twenty of the most beautiful budding yellow roses were handed to me by a smiling delivery man. Roses from Paul! How had he been able to send them? And so expensive. They gave me so much pleasure. He was alive! And so much heartache: when-when-when would I see him? When would he be home!

. . .

Shortly after my birthday, on one of my days off, I attempted my very first trip into New York City, a daring thing for me to do. But because Paul's roses meant that he was alive and soon would be coming him to me, this birthday blessing gave me the courage, despite my limited English, to venture into and through and out of the maze of transportation to get there. To see the wonders I had heard about, read about, seen only in

Hollywood movies, window-shop the fabulous 5th Avenue shops, the giant department stores, the Automats and the Cafeterias, stare at the movie cathedrals--Paramount, Strand, Capitol, Roxy, Radio City Music Hall, and the museums, libraries, art galleries and the Metropolitan Opera House and-and-and the elevated trains thundering over the crowds of people pouring down into and out of the subways and scrambling out of the way of onrushing hornblowing taxis and automobiles, all the wonders of a City skyscraping into and piercing the heavens, a million shining windows reflecting the tidal wave of the oncoming future already stamped into the faces and fashions of its six million men, women and children. I was excited, a nervousness mounted in me when I left for New York. As I took the New Rochelle trolley car to downtown Mount Vernon, there the express subway all the long ride down to 'Grand Central', there shuttling across to 'Times Square' and there taking the downtown subway-local that made stops at the 34th and 28th street stations and, finally, 23rd Street where, exiting up out into the street, I walked several blocks north on Seventh Avenue to 26th street and west towards the river to a shabby walk-up rooming house where--according to the vital bits of information given me by relatives in Germany and locked tight in my brain until this day--here in this run-down building--on the City's welfare rolls, <u>here my father lived</u>. Here was the reason for my excitement, my nervousness, my coiled-tight mental

tension, the true reason for this trip to the City of New York --not to see its 20th-century wonders, but to see my father whom I had not see in four long years. And so, wondering if we would recognize each other, I--now 20 years of age and he 50--entered the building, into a small doorless lobby, asking a young man on his way out if he knew where a Mister Winterfelt lived. Grunting, as he carefully sidled his way past me and towards the street, he thumbed over his shoulder where next to a barred and black-painted window, was a door--behind which would be the room in which my father lived. Slowly I walked the dark corridor, down to the end of it--an end to four years long of separation from my father, down to a door that had no name on it, no number, only an old coat of thin brown paint faded and peeling. I knocked on the door. No answer. Again I knocked. Again no answer. Where was he? Was this the right room? The right house? The right street? I didn't know what to do, where to go, who to ask. The sound of the front door opening turned me around. I saw a shrunken, ill-looking old man. He had just entered the lobby. And his steps short and careful, slowly making his way through the quiet dark corridor towards my father's room. My father? Could this <u>old</u> man be my father? "Poppi--?" I whispered. The old man stopped, peered slow and hard through the shadows. A long long pause, his lips barely moving, whispering "Ruth..." And finally after all these years, we moved into each other's arms to hug each

other tight...and into my father's room.

My father's room with its low water-stained ceiling and whitewashed walls of plasterboards was small, dingy, sunless. A cot with a soiled pillow and heavy black blanket over a tumble of sheets. And out of a crack in the wall, cockroaches streaming into the sink, foraging for food. My father's room --a thousand years from a long-ago past of luxury hotels, of holidays which he would sometimes share with my brother Rolf and me along with our Nanny and Housekeeper. And those other times, without his children, skiing and swimming and dancing, holidays of total freedom, of pleasure and women, this family-beloved virile male Charles Sidney, called always by his middle name Sidney, bearing proudly the Winterfelt name into the future. And here was the future, here sitting on an old wooden chair, hunched over the cracked oilclothed kitchen table, here an old man at fifty, his eyes peering, squinting, seeking to bring into focus the face of his daughter who was sitting opposite him. Between them, a kitchen table. And the years. But finally--those years gone--we were here. Together. I asked him to move to New Rochelle, to live near me. We could see each other all the time! I would be of such help to him! And with the comfort of love! I begged him. No. He loved New York, wouldn't give up the beat of this exciting city, this New York with its heart-thumping rhythm and sound, its vitality, its life that was his very life, here in this great city, here

he would stay. He would say no more. And when--just before I left, kissing his unshaven cheek, saying we'd be seeing each other soon--I asked him about his time in the concentration camp, he wouldn't speak about it. He only said that when he was released, he was told never to divulge anything that happened there, that if he did, they find him wherever he was, wherever he tried to hide, the threat binding him in a silence that with each day kept closing in on him forever ever-tighter and too frightening to ever think of breaking, a silence he dare not break--not even to his daughter Ruth, not even to his son Rolf.

And so it was, my first trip to the City of New York. To my father, not the City. To my Poppi.

. . .

Months went by, summer quickly drifted into fall and winter and the celebrations of Christmas and New Year's Eve when I I cooked and baked and served thirty people. Hard as I had worked in Germany, I had always been part of the family. Here in the K. household, I was a servant, a maid and a cook, eating by myself in the kitchen, always alone. Mrs. K kept piling on the chores. Besides cleaning a two-storey house, I had to clean out the cellar and the garage, doing the laundry--the washing and ironing, put the cat out, walk the dog. It was too much. I told my cousin Elli about this

backbreaking, this thankless job that I wanted to leave. And asked if I could stay with her and Marshall until I found a new job, a better job. The answer was Yes. I breathed easier. And gave notice to Mrs. K. She wanted me to stay. So much so that, knowing Paul was due to arrive in the United States, she promised he could live in the house with me. And more: that she--not me--would make the beds upstairs! It was too good an offer to refuse: less chores and Paul would live with me, share room and meals! I stayed, kept arranging and rearranging my room, a small picture on the wall here and flowers there by the bed. Paul couldn't come soon enough for me.

Until then, when I made the occasional trip to New York to see my father, I could not hide from myself how poorly Poppi looked, his body increasingly bent, the painful difficulty he endured in getting into a chair and with greater effort to rise slowly-slowly upward and, failing, fall back down into the chair, then with greater and ever more effort slowly squirm his body to sidle out of it. Helplessly watching this--he would not accept any physical assistance from me--my heart ached and I wondered how he could survive in this hovel of a room on what little he received from Welfar, a room with no cooking facilities, no icebox. And so, apart from the sandwich and cake I brought along, he ate--whatever, whenever--going to the all-night cafeteria down the street. Or the small grocery around the block to buy a few cold cuts and a small bottle of

milk. Cafeteria or grocery, for him a very long walk, painfully shuffling his way there and back. And if the weather was bad: rain-snow-wind! The least I could do, I did; but since he still refused to leave the City--his New York--and move to New Rochelle, I promised him half my monthly salary of thirty dollars.

On the long ride back, subway-trolley-bus, to New Rochelle that day, I kept thinking of my promise to Poppi. Fifteen dollars a month to him, leaving me with only $15 out of the monthly pay of thirty dollars! Could I manage it? I could manage, I could manage, my mind kept repeating. After all, I had my room and my meals--and Paul would be sharing them with me at no cost to either of us. Plus what Paul would earn once he found a job, there would be more than enough for both of us. Oh, I could manage! And felt so good about it that, before returning to my room at Mrs. K's, I had to stop off at Elli's place to tell her all about my visit.

Although her mother Jenny and father Richard were there having tea and cake and listening to every word I said, their presence couldn't stop the tumble of feelings that poured out of me: how poorly my father looked, aged and bent far beyond his years, who suffered pain to walk and pain to sit, who each day in this cramped and dark and vermin-infested room, each day from night-dark to sunless morning to sleep and wake here in such a place, lived this man to whom I promised what little

I could to help ease the bleakness of his existance: a promise of half my monthly pay, the promise of fifteen dollars each month to him, this man...my Poppi.

"Fifteen dollars!" Elli's mother Jenny exploded. "Fifty percent of your pay!" Jenny--Paul's aunt and so, by our recent marriage, mine--was outraged. Burning with righteousness, her words whipping through the sudden room silence, her feelings concerned only with her nephew Paul. "Your father?! You have a husband to think of! You need every penny!"

Her words hurt me, accusing me as if I had sinned, committed a terrible wrong. What kind of sin, what kind of wrong could it be? I had wanted to make the misery of Poppi's life--the life of my father, just a little less miserable. What was she accusing me of? Yet I saw the others in silent agreement with her. Why? Finally I realized that the affidavits they had given made them responsible for Paul for 5 years. And therefore I--his wife--had no right to promise money to anyone, not even my father.

When I was 6 years old, my father divorced my stepmother. He asked me to choose him or her. I chose her. Then stepped back in shock when he told me that she was not my mother. And now, for the second time in my life, I was told to choose: husband or father. And again I let my father down. As the time so many years ago when rather than remain with him in his

house in Magdeburg, I chose to leave him--and be with my brother Rolf in Hamburg. How can I explain to him why I couldn't keep my promise? Rejecting him again. Turning from him.

I couldn't face him.

Every time I got ready to see him, guilt overwhelmed me....and so I didn't visit him. And didn't phone him. Couldn't. He had no telephone. And so it was that months went by. On 3 May 1939, I got a call from a Mr. Turberg, a friend of my father's, he said--a lawyer. He asked me to come immediately to Bellevue Hospital in Manhattan, my father was seriously ill.

. . .

I stood at his bedside. He was in a semi-coma. Although I had never seen anyone die, I knew this was the end, an end without forgiveness, without acknowledgement that he had loved me. Too late. Too late. And far too late to find out that when Poppi had gotten sick, he had taken himself--walked all the way to Bellevue, a mile of city blocks away. Then days later...signed himself out and went home. His welfare check had not arrived or been lost or stolen, no money to buy any kind of food. His neighbors in the rooming house, themselves on welfare, shared their own sparse meals with him. His condition getting worse, he got himself back into Bellevue,

and so...

Until now, until I heard it from Mr. Turberg, I did not know any of this. How could I? But fifteen-dollar promise or not, I had been too cowardly to see him, to face him.

"Popp!" I whispered, close to his face. "Rolf is coming! Poppi! hold on--you haven't seen your son in five years! Rolf is coming! Your son is coming! Poppi!--oh Poppi!..."

I couldn't believe that this should happen now. I had so looked forward to Rolf's coming, all the while worrying about Paul.

Now Poppi was dying.

All the way home I accused myself: why hadn't I been there for him--my father, his daughter...why?

And--by subway and bus--all the long way home--I kept accusing myself, the pain hard and sharp. Home...

Mrs. K opened the door: "Ruth I am so sorry...your father passed away."

. . .

The next morning--Friday the Fourth of May--I was back at the hospital, Mr. Turberg already there. We went to the cafeteria. He told me how much he had worked to get Dad his German property back and how much he had liked Dad and that he had never received any money for all the work done for Dad. I still had my father's beautiful gold fob-watch. So--in a kind

of payment, an acknowledgement, for his legal efforts to obtain German reparations for Dad and for the deep feelings he felt for him--I gave Mr. Turberg Poppi's gold fob-watch. Far into the future, I heard that he had sold the watch. I was heartbroken.

Now he told me that the doctors wanted to perform an autopsy. But I should not let myself be persuaded, he said: "-- it's against the Jewish law." The doctors told me that my father had died of kidney failure--in which the disease had taken an unusual turn. Therefor, mankind might benefit if I gave permission. Back and forth, the doctors and the lawyer hammered away, each trying to make me see it their way: Jewish law forbids, Mankind benefits.

Since 1933 I had to make decision after decision, from one bad situation to another. Three more days, Rolf was coming. But now, once again, I had the burden of making a decision--alone. My father lay dead. My conscience tore at me. What to do? What to do? Finally, I granted permission, only if the doctors would make a small incision with no disfigurement to Dad's body. They promised. But still the lawyer kept haranguing me: how could I allow this?--what kind of daughter was I?--what kind of Jew was I?--didn't I have any decency in me? When he saw he couldn't dissuade me, he told me to go to the morgue, he would see me later.

Shaken, scared, I went there, sat waiting, not thinking,

not crying, suspended in time, not knowing how long.

Somebody tapped me on the shoulder. The lawyer. "We are ready," he said. Blankly, I looked at him. "Ready for what?" I said. "Come with me," he said. We walked outside. There stood a hearse, the driver waiting.

"Get in," the lawyer said.

"Get in?" I said. "Why?"

"It is Friday," he said. "Your father has to be buried before sundown, that's the Jewish law."

I got into the hearse, in front with the driver. The lawyer stood outside. "Aren't you coming?" I said.

"No," he said. "I'm sorry. Be grateful that I made the arrangement for your father to be buried. I am paying for this. Otherwise he'd be buried as a pauper. I am doing it for him, not for you." And--signalling to the driver--walked off, away. The driver started the engine...and so we left for the long trip through the tunnel to New Jersey.

I didn't believe what was happening. It never entered my mind Poppi would be buried that day. With no witnesses, no mourners. Only me. Elly and Marshall--and my employers--they would have been there for me--with me. I had been numb, unthinking. I looked behind me. There--in the back of the hearse--was a raw pine coffin with a blue velvet cloth--Star of David in its center--draped over it. Oh God, Poppi was being buried like a dog. How could that man, that lawyer, that

Mr. Turberg been so cruel? What could I do now? Furiously, helplessly, I engaged the driver in conversation, talking, talking all the time. Was this trip ever going to come to an end? How could I live after this? I was in agony.

We arrived at the cemetery. It was dusk. We came to the open gravesite. Three workers with shovels stood there waiting. The driver said kindly, "Why don't you stay in the hearse? It will be better for you."

I could not do that. At least, I his daughter, good or bad, had to give him this last tribute--accompanying my father to his final resting place. I followed the three workers as they carried the coffin to the gravesite. Carefully they lowered the coffin into the grave. I took a handful of earth and threw it down onto the coffin, and another two handfuls after that--as had been the custom in Europe. And so then -- I walked back to the waiting hearse...in my ears echoing the sounds of earth falling onto my father's coffin now buried in the grave-pit, in my heart an emptiness for a son's kaddish yet unsaid. But son--soon--the son would be here! Soon, Poppi's son--my brother Rolf--would be here. And the kaddish said!

And so, only after a few days after the death and burial of my father, Rolf arrived on May 7th. Elli and Marshall--who had agreed to rent him a room for little money--took me by car to the pier in New York. The ship slowly came moving into the dock.

I saw Rolf! And he saw me!

After all the horror of the last few days, there I was jumping up and down and waving, not able to contain my joy, to hug him to myself. No matter what else was to happen, I wasn't alone anymore. I had my brother back. And now he--our Father's son--could say the prayer for the dead.

Told him.

Asked him.

He refused! I begged him to do it for Dad and for me. No, he said, he wasn't religious. I told him I wasn't orthodox either. That a female was not permitted to say this prayer, only a male could, a son--Rolf. But to no avail. He said it would be hypocritical. I was disconsolate. Not even this, this final prayer for the dead, in praise and acknowledgement of the everlasting and merciful God, was to be given for Poppi.

Poppi had a son--but no kaddish. Poppi had a grave--but no gravestone.

And so--for two years Rolf and I saved for that stone and for the planting of the gravesite. Finally-finally-finally, with friends and relatives and a rabbi officiating, we had the unveiling of the stone, the rabbi saying the kaddish--joined by ten Jewish male-adults--witnesses consituting the prescribed minion, as is the custome in the Jewish faith. And now I was more at peace with myself. But yet it was that in the months stretching into years, I found it impossible to visit my father's

grave again. All kinds of reasons. But no answer. It gives me the shivers.

. . .

Little by little, my family had arrived in the U.S.A. Most of my American-born aunts were widows. They had automatically become German citizens at their marriage to Germans. And American law, in the Hitler years, allowed them--with proof of their widowhood--to reclaim their American citizenship. Their children, with valid affidavits, could enter the United States on preference-quota.

Aunt Milly was the first to come. She then procured papers for Ada, Meinhart and children. All of them were settled in the Bronx by the Jewish Agency, Aunt Milly getting a furnished room above them, all once more living under one roof. I didn't see anyone very often since the trip took two hours each way. No one had telephones. But Rolf was already living in New Rochelle, not far from me! And more than that, Elli, who knew every store owner in town, got Rolf a job in a hardware store at eight dollars a week. He found a little lunchroom where he could eat cheaply. Sundays, Rolf came to the K's to visit me. I always told him that I had already eaten. And so, without his knowing, my food was his food. It was the only decent meal he got all week. Generally, he spent his money on the movies. And finally so undernourished, we feared for his health.

Meanwhile, I got a letter from my friend Jochen. He and his family were in Canada! I was overjoyed. Even though his father had been deported to Poland, Hitler had decreed that all men born in Poland, no matter how long they had lived in Germany, had to return back to Poland...where luckily Papa Granek still had relatives and, being a tailor, able to find work there. And so it was that his brother in Hamilton, Canada, was able to bring the family--Mama Granek and the boys out of Magdeburg and Papa Granek out of Poland; and so, many obstacles overcome, the family was reunited in Canada, in freedom!

Jochen wrote that the most important part of their household goods was their sewing machine. There wasn't enough money to get these goods, and with it the sewing machine, out of storage. Jochen begged my forgiveness repeatedly, that he would never have asked me for the sixty dollars I owed them, and only because of Papa's urging did he finally consent to write to me. I immediately sent them the money. Two weeks later, I received another letter from Jochen. He apologized over and over again: he hadn't heard from me, did I send the money?

I rushed to the post-office, demanded to see the Postmaster. Angrily I asked what had happened to my money?

"Calm down, young lady," he said. "How did you send the money?"

"By money-order!"

"Did you fill anything out?"

"Yes!"

"Was there a small green printed receipt?"

"Yes!" I said, more impatient and angry than ever.

"What did you do with it?"

"It's here in my pocket!" I said, triumphantly producing the green receipt.

"That's why," the Postmaster smiled, continuing gently, "you friends didn't get the money. This is what you had to send to them--not keep it in your pocket. We'll start a new money-order and then you'll send the green part of the receipt to your friends and they'll bring it to the post-office in Toronto where they'll receive the money."

I wrote to the Graneks, apologizing for my mistake, giving the reason for the delay. By return mail, they thanked me over and over again. Papa was already working at home for a tailoring firm. Not long after that, Papa was in business for himself. Jochen who had learned to be a cutter, a special skill in tailoring, joined his father in business.

I was happy to have helped them, as they had helped me when I needed the money leaving Germany. And yet--still--60 dollars was two months of my salary! I never told Aunt Jenny a bout the money I sent to the Graneks. Remembering her explosive feelings against my $15-a-month promise to my Dad,

I didn't dare.

February 11, 1939, my Granny died in Germany. In a way, I was happy for her: Aunt Reny was booked for May to return to America; Aunt Rose had died of an embolism in 1937; and Aunt Sadie, with daughter Irmy, also was leaving Germany for America to live with son Helmar already living there in Wisconsin. Then what would have become of Granny, nearly 80 years old, they couldn't take her along; it would have been a nursing home for her and--later--most likely--the Theresian Stadt Konzentration Camp.

As for Aunt Reny, she became a companion to a wealthy old lady in Manhattan, spending summers in Atlantic City, New Jersey, and winters in Palm Beach, Florida. Especially rewarding were the operas, theatres and museums they attended in New York. Happy to have gotten this job with its year-round security and pleasures, Aunt Reny no longer had to be concerned as to what would have become of her. I always had a special relationship with her. In some ways I was her child. I knew she had wanted to adopt me. And so it was that in her will she left me all that was dear to her. All I ever wanted from her--and got--was her love, her precious unconditional love.

And there was Aunt Sadie, a spoiled millionaire's wife and widow in Germany, now living with son Helmar and daughter Irmy in a 3-room apartment in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Irmi found employment in the 'Boston Store', in their hair salon where she

learned to be a hairdresser; an apt pupil showing real talent in her chosen trade. I could never believe with what ease she and her mother made in their transition from one life-style to another. She yet surprised me once more, when she decided to get a college degree. Having married Al and moved to Riverside, California--their children now teen-agers, Irmi worked in the cosmetic department of the University of Riverside, part of UCLA. Deciding to aim for the top managerial position, she left for Los Angeles to achieve it, getting back to home and children only for weekends, holidays and summer vacations. And won what she had struggled for, becoming head of the Cosmetology Department until her retirement.

Meanwhile, Aunt Sadie--her mother--in 1941 became part of the war effort, working in a factory that turned out elements vital in the production of American armaments blasting away at the Axis powers; and to her own personal satisfaction, soon was promoted to the position of forelady. One time when I asked her what it was like living in a 3-room apartment in America, she--once acquainted to grander quarters in Germany--said: "At least, I don't have any problems with domestic help!" She never grumbled, happy to be in the country of her birth with her children and grandchildren.

. . .

And so it was that one year had passed since I had come to

America. It was now September 1939. Paul wrote that he went repeatedly to the American Consulate. No one knew what was holding things back for him; what, if anything, had gone wrong. We were both so frustrated and worried. Life was getting worse for the Jews in Germany. Every document--legal or otherwise--had a middle name inserted: "Sarah" for the women, "Israel" for the men. Were they ever going to find Paul's papers necessary for his legal right to leave Germany--before it was too late? I was glued to the radio, listening to every newscast. And then the news: Hitler had invaded Poland, England declaring war on Germany. War! I went numb. Would Germany still let anyone out of the country? How many times in the last year had I wanted to stow away on a ship to return to Berlin. Why didn't I? I couldn't stand my life another minute. I felt so bad about Paul, my husband Paul. How must he feel at this turn of events!

At least Mülle, Paul's sister, had gotten out of Germany to England a month earlier, Britain opening its doors to Jewish German women agreeing to work as domestics in English households. Paul's parents still were in Germany. I did my chores. I lost all hope. I was mourning our fate. My bed my only comfort.

One morning there was 'Happy', the postman, coming up the street, one finger up! Mail from Paul! I ran out of the house, not able to wait. Anxiously I tore the letter open. Paul wrote that since this was his last chance to get out of Germany,

he had gone once more to the American Consulate. Always he had been afraid to speak up so as not to jeopardize his case. But now the world whirling madly with Germany's invasion of Poland and England's declaration of war on Germany, Paul felt he had nothing to lose. He told the clerk that he would sit there until his papers would be found. The clerk was sympathetic, understanding, knew what was at stake for Paul, told him that three affidavits had been there all along, but that his wife's affidavit was mislaid; probably Paul no longer needed the preference quota and therefore not my affidavit. But the clerk was willing to take a last look to see if he could find it. Some time passed...Paul tense and fearful. And then there he was: the clerk returning, waving the precious paper in his hand. He had found it! Paul was issued a visa!--free to enter the United States!

Long ago, Paul had paid for a ticket for future passage on the German Hapag-Lloyd line. But the war halted all crossings to the U.S.A. Paul went to the Holland-American Line. They would book him, but he had to pay in dollars. In his letter, he asked me to wire him $200. Two hundred dollars--a fortune! I asked my boss Mr. K if he would lend me the money. He was a very nice man. He took me to the bank where he vouched for me. They lent me the money. Suddenly the world was beautiful. Paul would finally be on his way!

I waited for his next letter to advise me the date of his

arrival and the ship's name. And until I heard from him, I was glued to the radio, waiting for every news program. An announcement was made that the 'Simon Bolivar' hit a mine in the English Channel and sank with no survivors! I was reeling. Had Paul been aboard? Why hadn't I heard from him? I just wanted to die. Had I known that Simon Bolivar was a South American hero, I would have known that the ship was never destined for New York. As it was, Paul came on the 'Rotterdam', that liner's last crossing. Had it been sunk, the ship's line would have received insurance compensation. Knowing this, the passengers were afraid, wondering what might happen to them. Would they, finally having won their freedom, make it to New York?!

Once more 'Happy' came down the street, one finger up--mail from Paul! I flew out of the door. Would there be an arrival date? I ripped open the letter. December 2, the day he would arrive! I hugged 'Happy'. Ten days to wait! Could I wait another ten days? I couldn't--but I did. In all the excitement, there still was a nagging worry: the mined English Channel! But no, it just couldn't happen now. I carried the radio a round with me while doing my work, listening to the news.

And then there it was--December 2nd!

Ellie and Marshall took me to the pier. Sixteen months had passed. The waiting wa over. The ship already docked. I

was so intent on finding him that I ignored the tap on my shoulder. I turned. And there was Paul! I fell into his arms. Crying, laughing, hanging on to him, unbelieving that this moment had been granted me. We both slept that night at Elli's.

The next morning I had to be back at work. I didn't want to leave him. What could I do? I hoped that Mrs. K would congratulate me and invite Paul to live with me in her house, as promised. She in no way acknowledged that Paul had arrived in America. I was so timid than that I just started to work as if nothing of importance had happened. Meanwhile, Paul stayed with Elli. We tried to get Paul work in his profession but without success. I saw him every Thursday and every Sunday --my days off. He also visited me some nights.

In February 1940, the K's went to Florida. I stayed home with Bobby. I couldn't stand the separation any longer. I told Paul to move in. When the K's came back from Florida, Mrs. K never acknowledged this accomplished fact. But--she cut the rations way down! We slept in a single bed for one year, though the K's owned a furniture store and auction house.

Paul was beside himself with nothing to do all the four months since his arrival. I asked Mr. K to give Paul a job, anything. Again Mr. K came through for me. He hired him at $18 a week less $6, because he lived in their house--so there it was: $12 in hand. At first Paul dusted furniture in the store, and uncrated the new furniture that came into the

warehouse. Paul learned to drive, also made his chauffeur's license--which helped save his life later in World War II. Now he was on the truck, not driving, but helping the delivery of the furniture. And all this time, I was afraid to eat any of the fruit or goodies in the house. I asked Mrs. K would she please buy more potatoes and bread, we could make do with that. She ignored my request, her behavior changing from bad to worse. I asked Mr. K would he please pay Paul the full $18 so I could give Mrs. K the $6 for Paul's board-and-room he shared with me. Mr. K agreed to it. It made no difference to Mrs. K, the rations stayed cut. I asked Paul if we couldn't leave the K's. He said we had to stay. His reason: Marshal and his sisters had promised Paul to provide affidavits for his parents who still were in Germany--but only after Paul got a job. And so they did. And so--we stayed with the K's.

The Jewish Agency approached us. The affidavits for Paul's parents were approved. The Agency would pay for part of their trip to America; our part was $600. It was 1941 and Hitler needed dollars. For payment in dollars, he would release Jews with valid papers and were 65 years or older. The Jewish Agency paid this ransom in dollars for each Jew leaving Garmany--and that included my in-laws, Paul's parents. We promised to pay $100 a month for six months. After a month or so, we inquired why we hadn't heard from the Agency. They answered that Paul's parents had to wait until we paid up all the money. Paul sold

Leica camera and a few other things he had brought out of Germany. And so to pay up all the rest of the money to get Paul's parents out of Hitler-Germany in the shortest possible time, Mr. K once more went with us to the bank, vouching for the money we borrowed.

It was Bobby K's bar-mitzvah, a catered affair at home. I worked until all the windows were shining, the house gleaming. Our room became a bar. We slept in the living room on the sofa. Mrs. K bought me a black uniform cap and white apron. I felt diminished. Later when I heard about the Holocaust, I realized how lucky I had been.

The party was over. We had lots of leftovers which I wrapped up. Paul and I then carried our bed back into our room. We finally got to sleep. Next morning I cleaned up the mess. I was tired. But--in the afternoon Bobby's whole Boy Scout troop came trotting down into the cellar. We served them cake and ice-cream. After they left, I cleaned up the cellar. At dinner time, I couldn't wait to get finished and clean up. I fell into bed exhausted. But at 11 p.m. Mrs. K woke me, told me to serve coffee and cake to her guests. After they left, I cleaned up, went upstairs to take the cat and the dog out. Mrs. K said "Leave it be, I'll take them out later."

"You'll forget," I said. "Please let me take them out now. "No, no," she said. "Go to bed."

The next morning Bobby came downstairs, said "My mother

wants you to come upstairs a nd clean up the dog's mess."

I couldn't take any more. I lost my temper, exploded: "Go upstairs and tell your mother to clean it up herself!"

Bobby went up a nd came down again. "My mother says," he said, "that if you don't come up to clean the dog's mess, you can leave."

I stared at young Bobby. I had had it. "You go and tell your mother I am packing!" And started to pack.

I was scared. But nothing could make me stay there. Would Paul keep his job? Would Elli take us in? For two years I had wanted to leave. I stayed so Paul could live in their house. And, again, I stayed so that we'd get affidavits for Paul's parents, Still, I had been lucky: Mr. K always kind and helping. Would he come through for us again?

I finished packing. Leaving, my emotions were in turmoil. Would Paul be furious? Would Elli think me irresponsible: how could I even think of leaving!

But--Elli was great! She took both of us in! Paul kept his job! I loved Mr. K!

I applied for a job as a sleep-in domestic at a Mrs. B's house. She really likedme. We talked about my previous employment. She hired me and with permission for Paul to stay with me and also that he could continue to work for Mr. K. I was elated. Getting back to Elli, I told her the good news.

"You didn't get that job," Elli told me. "Mrs. K

gave you a bad recommendation."

I was stunned. I went right back to Mrs. B. "After all," I told her, "I worked at Mrs. K's for two-and-a-half years! She didn't fire me--I quit!"

But to no avail, Mrs. B didn't change her mind.

What was I going to do? I had to go back to Mrs. K and eat crow.....and by the time I was leaving, she was friendly.

I told Elli about my visit to Mrs. K.

"I know," Elli said. "Mrs. K called, she wants you back. But as a 'sleep-out'."

"In-or-out," I said, "I'll never work for that witch again!"

Yet because Mrs. K had been my last--and only--employer, prospective employers called her to check my character and skills. But again and again Mrs. K continued to refuse recommending me. Finally, with Elli acting as a former employer and giving me a good recommendation, I got hired by a Mrs. MacMichael as a sleep-out at $12 a week, Paul now earning $25 a week still working for Mr. K. On week-ends, we looked at apartments for rent.

We expected to hear from Paul's parents. The news from Germany got worse. It was May 1941. We were still living at Elli's for very little money. What would we have done without them!

I didn't know how to tell Paul that I had little hope his

parents still would get out of Germany. When I broached this awful possibility to him, he said "I know." And remained mute all the way home to Elli's. And there, waiting for us, was a postcard from Lisbon--from his parents! They wrote they had left their apartment in Germany with no suitcases, walked out as if they would return. Getting to the train station in Berlin, they became part of hundreds of older people and, with them, were hurried by Storm Trooper into a long line of railroad cars and all doors sealed off, not to be opened until arrival in Lisbon. And so it was--they had gotten out of Hitler-Germany! They were safe! And would be arriving in Hoboken on 24 June! Now we looked for a very special apartment: one with two bedrooms, to accomodate both us and Paul's parents.

Again through Elli, we got one; on the second floor of a private house with a big porch. Beautiful chestnut trees formed a bower down the whole street. And got the place at a low rental because we were willing to remove and install the house window screens a nd take care of the basement furnace. We bought two bedroom sets, one for Paul's parents, one for us getting them at a discount price because Paul worked in Mr. K's furniture-and--a uction business;where we also purchased living-room and dinette furniture. And from the large crate I had brought out of Germany--free to do so as an American citizen!--a crate filled with dishes, silver, kitchen appliances, and placed in storage in Mr. K's warehouse at no

charge to Paul and Ruth Redlich--Mr. K's kindness and generosity continuing to favor us--so that we were able, to relatively low cost, to completely furnish all the household needs of our new apartment.

In the midst of all this, I was to lose four teeth! I went around to different dentists to find the best possible price for the partial I needed, the best being $100, to be paid off at $15 a month. We were still paying off part of the $600 for the trip of Paul's parents. And, discounted though it was, still paying off the furniture for the apartment. Yet, happily, we moved everything in, just in time for my in-laws arrival.

I was in heaven! Our very own place! Our first apartment --light and airy. And having two bedrooms: Paul's parents in one. And in the other--Paul and Ruth Redlich!

Paul borrowed a car. We were on our way to Hoboken, soon to greet Paul's parents on their arrival in America and its freedom. Safe at last! And Paul's sister Mulle, despite bombings by Nazi planes, 'safe' in England. Paul had told me how guilty he had felt at his own departure, leaving his parents behind in Germany, all three not knowing would they ever see each other <u>alive</u> again.

And here they were, coming off the boat, here in America, safe--and in each other's arms! And then, in the car, Paul asked: "Did you bring any money?" They said Yes--About $50.

A fortune!

"Please," said Paul, "don't be upset--but we spent our last money..."

And so--silently--they gave the money, their $50, to their son Paul. But--no matter how much we tried to explain our financial situation to them--they never forgave us.

The first thing we did was to visit Elli. Her parents and her sister Erna were all waiting for us. My father-in-law was Aunt Jenny's brother, my mother-in-law Jenny's best friend. I looked all around me--all the faces radiating happiness, the room thick with it and the sound of a great joy.

. . .

Now that we had our own apartment, Paul and his father taught me to play 'Skat', a card-game that mostly men play in Germany. It's a bit like pinochle. And with no money to spend for going-out entertainment--at that time no T.V.--we played cards, night after night. We met a refugee couple--Hedy and Siggy--who also played Skat, and they now joined in with us. We played for very little money, the small pots put into a kitty which provided us with all holiday meals and, once a year, to the theatre in New York City.

Hedy and Siggy saved every penny they could to help get their family out of Germany in time to save their lives. They failed.

When the private house,a 3-family house in which we lived, went for sale on the market, Siggy and Hedy bought it, moving into the first-floor apartment. They had no money left to furnish it. Little by little, Paul brought things home from the K auction floor that were not sold. We had lots of fun making do with what Paul got. Hedy was working in a sweatshop sewing slipcovers and drapes. She had a power sewing-machine at home. And so, in no time, their apartment looked lovely. Paul got Siggy a job in his firm, and one also for Ada's husband Meinhart. But in the very beginning, it was Elli who got jobs for all the men, including Rolf. Elli had such vital energy, am thankful to her all my life. I met Lois and her husband 'Mooch' after I gave birth to Rita. They were my friends for more than forty years, but out social life didn't start until WW-II ended in Europe in 1945 and Paul coming home, Joani born one year later, 27 October 1946.

But until that year, Paul continued to work for Mr. K, learned the business from the ground up: dusting, polishing, crating, shipping, auctioning--and got another raise. He worked for Mr. K for 35 years to become the head of Quality Control and, also, of the Claims Department. And so my years as a/ domestic came to an end. And so too in the Spring of 1942, life had changed for all Americans. With the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, 7 December 1941, swiftly followed by Germany's declaration of war against the U.S., the nation geared its

production strength and manpower, farm-factory-armed forces, in the all-out war against the Axis onslaught by Japan, Germany, Italy; the waves of war sweeping into our lives in New Rochelle. My father-in-law started to work at the Rex Factory there, which had converted from making ladies' compacts into the production of one of those parts essential to being fit together with the thousand-and-one other parts manufactured all over the country. No part too small not to be vital in growing the military strength of the U.S., and every worker being essential to that goal, my father-in-law contributing his share. Every day he returned home oil-begrimed, having taken care of the machinery in that war-converted Rex factory.

And so it was that his and Paul's income enabled me to stay at home.

I wanted a baby. We had no hospital insurance. And we still had debts. Paul said we coudln't afford it. I promised I would utilize the medical clinic. What could he do? He couldn't deny me. He agreed. I got pregnant.

Once a month I went to be examined at the hospital. Hours and hours I and many other indigent persons waited to be seen. Always there were medical students present. They also examined me.

I started to bleed. I had to stay in bed for days. I gave up my monthly check-ups. Meanwhile my in-laws found a

small apartment, sharing a bathroom with another family living on the same floor. They could manage. We couldn't afford the big apartment, so we moved up to the third floor, this new apartment also having two bedrooms.

In November 1942 my brother Rolf got married in Ohio. I was in my ninth month of pregnancy and so I couldn't attend his wedding. I was happy for him, but saddened at not being able to attend.

Rolf volunteered for the Army. He wanted to get into the Signal Corps. He was already learning to become an electronics engineer and wanted to continue with it in the Army. He and his wife Jean moved to New Jersey where he was stationed. Eventually he was sent overseas, He served in General Patton's 3rd Army, detonating mines. Patton later decorated Rolf and made him a Lieutenant in the field. After V-E Day, Rolf became the military commander of a small town in Germany. He never let on that he spoke German. He always had a translator by his side. That way he got to know a lot of things that would not have been possible otherwise. All all that time he was overseas, I had no idea he was detonatin mines. Though I worried about him, at least I was spared that knoeldge.

My 'time' came: my water broke. We rushed to the hospital. At that time, men were not allowed into the maternity wards. We hated to leave each other. I was scared, tried not to show it. Inside, I was told to walk up and down the hall to bring

on labor. It didn't happen. For the next two days I was allowed to visit with Paul in the waiting room. Everyone who saw me laughed because I was so tremendous. Finally I was in the labor room together with another woman, a Mrs. Schreiber. We started talking. She was expecting her second child. She had a 3-year old daughter. Mrs. Schreiber was ready to give birth before I did. I wished her luck as she was wheeled out. Later the nurse told me that Mrs. Schreiber had given birth to a son--but that he was stillborn.

My doctor, an intern, assured me that the same was not to happen to me and that he would deliver my baby. Two hours later another intern assured me that everything would be fine and that he would deliver my baby. All the waiting and all the interns and all the assurances didn't make me feel any more secure. In the end they sedated me to such an extent that I didn't see my first baby born: a daughter--Rita--on December 2, 1942, exactly three years after Paul's arrival in the United States on December 2, 1939.

I had only a baby layette for my Rita. Luckily, Mrs. Schreiber sent me all her daughter's outgrown clothes. Now my baby daughter Rita was going to be dressed in the most beautiful outfits for years to come. I became friendly with Mrs. Schreiber, visited her many times. Her husband was a lawyer. They lived in a lovely house. Nine months later, both our husbands were in the U.S. Army and after training were sent overseas. She invited me to share her home with her. I considered it, but declined. I

was leary. No matter how nice Mrs. Schreiber was, we were not on a first-name basis. I was Ruth and she was Mrs. Schreiber. I wasn't taking any chances. It was hard to be on my own, but I had to be independent.

On the fifth day after giving birth, I left the hospital with baby Rita. On that very day, coming home--in the middle of winter--the furnace broken down! Paul brought a small heater from the office and lots of canned goods. I still had feather-beds from Germany. Baby Rita and I stayed under them for the next few days. I was nursing her. We only got up for her to be diapered and me to go to the john.

Our apartment had two bedrooms. Once up and about, I couldn't believe it: I lived in my own apartment with my husband and daughter, my husband working, I a housewife taking care of our baby. Nine years had passed. Had this been my dream? No, I had only been treading water from one crisis to another. Little did I know that also this was not to last. October 1943, Paul was inducted into the Army.

After basic training in South Carolina, he returned on a 10-day leave. It was our last night together. Rita was sleeping. In the corner of the room, his packed duffel bag leaned against the wall, waiting. Paul was going overseas as <u>replacement</u>--somewhere at the front, to replace the man--the men--who had been killed there. This was not a dream but a war--our war now. We could fight Hitler! No longer victims of his death-inspired regime. Yet how were we, how could we, survive this second

separation, not three years since the last one? Again not knowing. Again without him. For how long? Replacement! We made believe that this was a night like any other. But there in the corner was that duffel bag--waiting. I didn't go with him to the station. I didn't stand by the window to see him go. His scent was still filling the room. I breathed it in.

. . .

As soon as I received Paul's APO number, #2040607, his army address in whatever part of the world he might be stationed, I wrote to him every day for two years. But because of the unavoidably delayed delivery of mail from the war front to the home front, his letters to me came in bunches.

And so it was that one day, I knew he had been sent to Africa. On returning to base after a gruelling 20-mile forced march with full equipment, he finally managed to take off his boots, the pain excruciating. His feet were swollen and bloody, the skin rubbed completely off his toes. Paul's toes had always been pushing hard against each other, but never had interfered with his sports activities or his normal walking about. The military doctors advised the army authorities that Paul could not serve in the infantry, could not be a foot-soldier. And so it was that he was transferred to the Quartermaster Corps, driving the trucks that kept the infantry fully equipped and provisioned. I thanked God for Paul's 'funny' toes and that he had already gotten his chauffeur's license before he was taken into the

army. I am sure his toes and his license saved his life.

Paul served in General Mark Clark's 5th Army, winding up in Italy right through the end of the war, finally returning home in November, 1945; twenty-five endless months of waiting and worrying: fearing the worst, hoping against hope for the best as news of battles and casualties came over the radio--sole companion to my misery.

During all that time, the Army paid me $80 a month. It was not enough to manage: I put an ad in the paper...and so rented out the spare room, with kitchen privileges. After a few dismal experiences, I decided I wanted a young lady with references. And so it was that Clara, my pharmacist's sister, came to live with Baby Rita and me 'til the end of the war. She paid me $8 a week. She became my friend. One day I went to a party. Someone there had heard that the Government was looking for translators. And since a neighbor, Helen, would be willing to watch Baby Rita, I decided to try my luck for such a job; better than constantly worrying about what might be happening to Paul overseas...and so make the endless waiting easier to bear.

I applied at the Office of Censorship on West 25th Street in New York City. There I took a test translating German into English, then English into German. I passed, got the job, got fingerprinted, got security clearance. And swore not to divulge the details of my job. I also had to promise not to write a

book about my experiences at the Office of Censorship. We were briefed as to what to look for in reading the mail of German prisoners of war, I now was a U.S. censor working in Intelligence for the O.S.S. I received my I.D. tag.

I worked on the 14th floor: a big hall with about 300 people working at long tables. We read about 100 letters a day, 15 of those from the prisoners to Germany, the rest incoming mail to the prisoners. They were hard to read because of the tissue-thin paper on which they were written, and also because of the Gothic-style handwriting. Everyone had a razor-blade to excise what had to be censored. In the outgoing mail of the prisoners, we encircled where it had to be deleted--blacked out. This had to be sent up to another floor. Mostly we censored if the prisoners had experiences that went against the Geneva convention of fraternization in factories where they worked, etc. And we were looking for news of fights of Nazis against anti-Nazis. After interrogation, the anti-Nazis were shipped out from every camp in the U.S. to Ft. Devens where our Government groomed them to be part of a new government in Germany after the war. Diplomatic mail was not to be read. If by mistake the envelope was opened, there was hell to pay. Apologies were to be written by the head of our diplomatic service. Before we deleted anything, we had to write a submission ('essay') what our reasons were for prospective deletions. We also worked for the R.A.F. At war's end, a high-ranking RAF officer came to thank us for the work

we had done to bring about victory over the Nazis.

The prisoners couldn't fathom how much their interrogators knew about them. All submissions went into a special file-room. If the same information was submitted by many of the 300 censor-examiners concerning German installations and factories: a wife writing her prisoner-husband that her town's population had doubled due to a large increase of soldiers and workers, this information was given to the R.A.F. Eventually, I was promoted to the 'Watch-List'. No longer reading the regular mail, I now read the incoming and outgoing mail of high-ranking German officers. They had many contacts in the U.S. and in South America. Sometimes, one letter took me all day. I had to go to different floors in our building to read up on the activities of their contacts. I then had to write a submission on all the information I had learned. We never deleted the officers' mail. They never knew that they were being watched; and I doubt that their contacts knew. I got to know these officers, their wives and parents, intimately...and their living standards and their sex lives. It was all most interesting.

At the end of 1945, I was offered the opportunity to work for Intelligence in Fontainebleau, France. I would wear an officer's uniform--which I would have to purchase myself. And was told that I would be able to save $20,000 in one year! And given an alternative job-offer: to work under Werner von Braun in Akron, Ohio, to translate his rocket-expertise into English. When I asked would I be able to do so, their answer: "You'll learn." I asked if I chose to go to Fontainebleau, what about

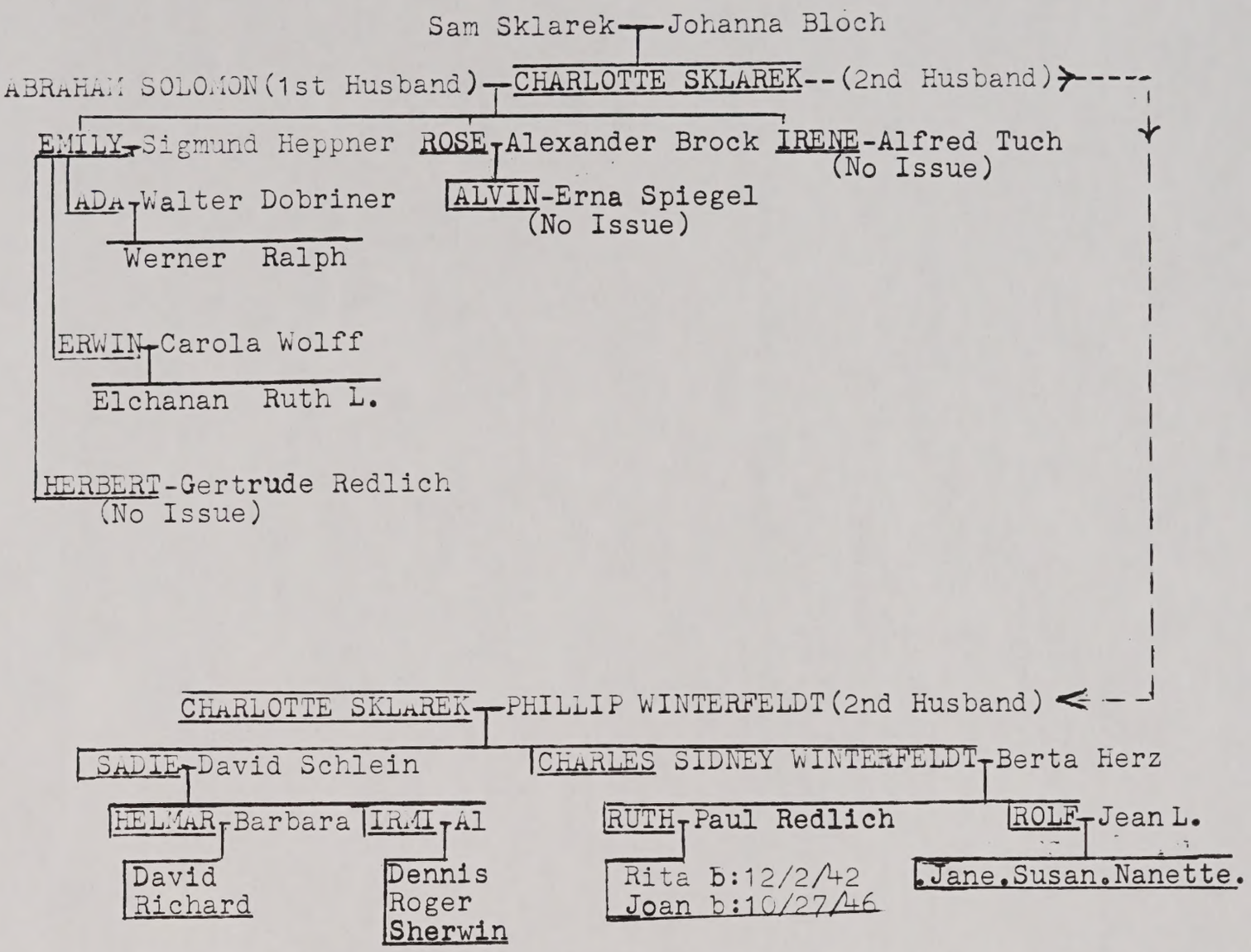
my husband? And told that he could also go, but that I would be his superior! Further, that there would be plenty of nannies to take care of my baby Rita, who had been taken care of by my neighbor Helen while I worked at Censorship in New York City.

It was a great temptation. But Paul wouldn't be happy, my being his 'superior'. Would he want to return to Europe? He wasn't even home from Italy yet! And did I want to return to Europe? And for how long? What I really wanted was to have my husband home with me and our Rita. To live a normal life. To have another baby. And so it was. I got a Letter of Merit for having worked for the war effort. I never regretted my decision. Many single people went to Fontainebleau, later working for the OSS in other places. Some came back to America, some stayed in Europe. I stayed....in New Rochelle. But whatever and wherever, in the next twenty-five years I couldn't face anything that dealt with the Nazis and their havoc of death.

. . .

And so, out of the shadows drifting, that is the way it was--pieces of my time.

* * *


Sam Sklarek—Johanna Bloch
ABRAHAM SOLOMON(1st Husband)—CHARLOTTE SKLAREK--(2nd Husband)
EMILY-Sigmund Heppner
ROSE-Alexander Brock
IRENE-Alfred Tuch
(No Issue)
ADA-Walter Dobriner
Werner Ralph
ALVIN-Erna Spiegel
(No Issue)
ERWIN-Carola Wolff
Elchanan Ruth L.
HERBERT-Gertrude Redlich
(No Issue)
CHARLOTTE SKLAREK—PHILLIP WINTERFELDT(2nd Husband)
SADIE-David Schlein
CHARLES SIDNEY WINTERFELDT-Berta Herz
HELMAR-Barbara
IRMI-Al
David
Richard
Dennis
Roger
Sherwin
RUTH-Paul Redlich
ROLF-Jean L.
Rita b:12/2/42
Joan b:10/27/46
Jane.Susan.Nanette.